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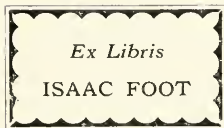

THE LETTERS OF AN ENGLISHMAN

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

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THE LETTERS OF AN ENGLISHMAN

Whibley, Charles

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LETTERS OF AN ENGLISHMAN

I

EL DORADO

ONCE upon a time an Englishman organised an expedition whose end and aim were to discover the hidden treasure of the ancient Jewish kings. He took advantage of all the classic artifices. A cipher indicated the hiding-place of the gold, the silver, and the precious stones. He was said to work in secret, and by changing shifts to keep his diggers at their toil day and night. One report declared that his motive was merely archæological. Another hinted that already the 'Solomonic regalia' had been placed for safety in his yacht. And whatever of truth there might be in this conflict of rumours, it seemed certain that the enterprising Englishman was putting into practice the sternly logical theory of the *Gold Bug*.

But like most other searchers after hidden

gold, the hero who, forgetting King Solomon's mines, would penetrate King Solomon's treasure-house did not escape without armed opposition. A band of devout Mohammedans, fearful lest a sacrilegious hand should be laid upon the Mosque of Omar, which stands where once stood the temple of Solomon, threatened to massacre all the Christians and all the Turks who favoured the infidel. For a while Jerusalem was held in the grip of terror, and peace was restored only by the promise of the Turkish Grand Vizier to defend the holy places and to punish whatever brigands dared to desecrate them.

The Englishman who met with so little sympathy in Jerusalem is the last of a long line of brave adventurers. For more than three centuries our countrymen have led the way in the search after hidden treasure. They have placed a child-like faith in the pot of gold that lies concealed at the rainbow's foot, and they have followed the rainbow, or another wizard's lure, half round the globe. They have endured hunger, thirst, and fever, and yet not surrendered the quest. Those who left their bones to bleach under the southern sun have been followed by brave companions eager to emulate their courage and willing, if

need be, to share their fate ; and it is not too much to say that the spirit of adventure, which has always animated our nation, found its best encouragement in the myriad-hued dream of hidden gold.

When Drake sailed to the Spanish Main to surprise the treasure of the world he cherished many other ambitions besides the vulgar, if comfortable, ambition of filling his pocket. He would pluck the Spaniard by the beard ; he would prove in the face of the world the English hatred of the Inquisition and its master. And this mingling of religion and buccaneering was, as Froude says, 'a school like none other of seamanship and a school for the building of vessels which could outsail all others on the sea.' What lessons of hardihood and greed too, if you like, did Drake teach his men when he told them that at Nombre de Dios was concealed all the rich spoils of the Peruvian mines ! With such a temptation ahead of them his men would follow their trusted captain wherever he went ; they would carry out with a smile his most desperate orders ; they would take whichever came, death or gold, and utter no word of complaint. Nor, indeed, had the survivors reason to complain. If their leader failed to

discover the treasure of Nombre de Dios, the mule-train filled all their pockets, and they brought back to Plymouth not only the coloured legends, which still survive, but a very pleasant burden of gold and precious stones.

Far more dimly mysterious, more heavily charged with romance than any treasure-house of Drake's imagining, was El Dorado, that phantom king or kingdom, which with its golden thread of deceit drew so many brave adventurers to their doom. In the remote past a fairy-tale was told of a monarch powdered with gold, and from the monarch the fairy-tale shifted to his city, vast in extent and glistening like himself with gold. Beyond the Andes it lay, and its very name, El Dorado, tempted men as no other two words had ever tempted them.

Of all the heroes whose faith in El Dorado went far beyond their knowledge none was more unhappy than Walter Raleigh. They bade him conduct his enterprise when the very shadow of the scaffold was upon him. Yet he set forth on his voyage to Guiana with a quiet fortitude, and with a spark of hope burning in his breast. For him the wonderful treasure that lay in the valley of the Orinoco

was no myth. ‘Many years since,’ he wrote, ‘I had knowledge by relation of that mighty, rich, and beautiful empire of Guiana, and of their great and golden city which the Spaniards call El Dorado and the naturals Manoa.’ Nor did he seem to have any doubt as to what he would find there. ‘The common soldier,’ said he, ‘shall here fight for gold and pay himself instead of pence with plates of half a foot broad,’ and as for the commanders, ‘that shoot at honour and abundance,’ they ‘shall find there more rich and beautiful cities, more temples adorned with golden images, more sepulchres filled with treasure, than either Cortez found in Mexico or Pizarro in Peru.’ Raleigh found no abundance save an abundance of sorrow; the only honour that he gained was the honour of his plighted word, which brought him grimly to his death.

Yet misfortune has been no check upon the treasure-seekers. They are as active to-day as they were before ever Raleigh set out upon his last voyage. They still follow wherever the will-o’-the-wisp of their own fancy leads them. They are still ready victims to the charm of words. That which they seek has ever the sound of romance about it. Who would not imperil his life for the Church-

plate of Lima or for the booty of that most notorious scoundrel, Captain Kidd, who rendered up his soul at Execution Dock more than two centuries ago? And they pursue the same purpose, do our modern travellers, with the same logical persistence. Charts have they and ciphers. They count the trees till they come to a clearing in the forest, and then nothing remains for them but to dig so many feet down and their spade will assuredly strike upon pieces of eight. Happily, indeed, there still survive adventurers bold and careless enough to employ the inductive method of Edgar Poe and to sail the Southern Sea in search of booty.

The search is seldom successful, and therein lies its good fortune. Undertaken for its own sake, it is guiltless of greed. Its purpose lies less in the thing sought than in the adventures that come by the way. The mariners who believe that Captain Kidd buried the spoils of his piracy are moved by a noble credulity. They play their game according to the ancient rules. They pretend that the scrap of parchment, worn with age and discoloured by seawater, which serves them for a chart is a serious document. And for the sake of romance let us hope that this spirit of simple

enterprise will never die out among us. Let our adventurers explore all the islands of the Spanish Main ; let them seek the wealth of the Armada in all the firths of Scotland ; and may no worse misfortune overtake them than failure to find that which they seek ! To discover a hoard of Spanish treasure will be to lose what is far more precious, the very breath of romance. Even the rainbow itself shall vanish if once an impious hand touch the gold which is buried beneath it.

II

OF VANITY

VANITY, the defect of the quality ambition, is of all defects, save miserliness, the most tiresome. It is deformed by a frigid calculation which is the born foe of carelessness and generosity. Vices there are which disarm criticism by a touch of largeness and amiability. We can easily forgive the roysterer, for instance, because he most gladly shares his stolen pleasures. The vain man, on the contrary, lives and sins to and for himself. He is perfect in egoism, and would willingly see the whole world in ashes if, amid the general conflagration, a spark of brilliance lit up for a moment his marble brow.

The vain man desires nothing more than to reach the temple of fame or notoriety by the shortest cut, to be pointed at by the passer-by, to linger for a while in the mouths of men. But it is not by legitimate exertion that he would achieve his end. He asks that the palm

shall be his without the dust. And so he will leave nothing undone that will call attention to himself. He will cover his body with strange raiment that idle spectators may wonder who he is. For he knows that a man who wears a green coat may attract a livelier curiosity than he who has written a great poem. Above all, he is impervious to ridicule. If other means fail him, he will paint his face white, and beat his drum in the market-place, splitting our ears with his raucous music, and feeling no shame that he wins his advertisement from the contempt and discomfort of others.

He is the declared enemy of social life and no fit companion for honest men. In the first place, he hates all those who impede, or do not advance, his progress. In the second, he can talk only of himself. He is impenetrable to general ideas. Politics and literature interest him only if he is permitted to expound them. The sound of another's voice instantly disquiets him. He cannot bear that the current of interest should be diverted from him for a single instant. 'When I ope my mouth,' says he, 'let no dog bark.' He must monopolise the talk, as he must draw all eyes to him. And the talk must be all upon one

subject. He is happiest when he can recount to an admiring throng what he said once to A or B. Nothing delights him so keenly as the memory of an ancient repartee. His voice assumes a new thrill, his eye flashes more brightly than ever before if he be permitted to amuse his company with tales of victories won in the combat of wits, and his pride has so roughly blunted his perception that he is incapable of measuring the boredom he inflicts.

Such a man is not content to do his work and let it win the applause it deserves. He must always bill his own hoarding, and he cares not what the fools are who gape at his fantastic presentment. As to the quality of the praise he is completely indifferent. Only it must be thick and obvious. He and his exploits must be perpetually extolled while detraction is busy with the exploits of others. He agrees with Montaigne that 'commendation is ever pleasing, from whom, from whence, or wheresoever it comes.' He indignantly rejects Montaigne's corollary: 'Yet ought a man to be informed of the cause, if he will justly please and applaud himself therewith.' He cares not a jot what the cause may be. Let the drums beat, the trumpets blare, and all the flags be unfurled. What matters it if

he appear ridiculous? He will endure every obloquy save silence.

Hence it follows that he has no sense of humour. If only once he would laugh at his own antics, his vanity would perish like snow in sunshine. But laughter is denied him, and he goes through the world in demure anxiety, restless if the light be not turned upon him, if the talk be not of his perfections, if patient worshippers lie not at his feet. And this dismal age is in his eyes an age of gold. The newspaper is for him what grass was for Nebuchadnezzar: he lives upon it. And how brightly does he smile in the face of the camera! 'No day without a line,' said the painter of old. 'No day without picture or paragraph,' echoes the vainglorious hero. It was said of M. Zola that he would lay aside his paper in disgust if he found therein no other news than of European wars, governments resigned, parliaments dissolved, and brutal murders. But if he caught sight at the bottom of a column of a report that M. Zola's *L'Assommoir* had been successfully played at Toulon, he would rub his hands in glee and declare that never had he seen a more highly interesting journal in his life.

To those who would catch vanity in the

act I would commend a colossal ineptitude entitled *George Bernard Shaw: His Life and Works,* by Dr. Henderson. I know not whether the book be tragedy or comedy, whether it be fit for tears or laughter. I can hardly believe in the verisimilitude of the portrait. Mr. Shaw is a dramatist who received his education in suburban debating societies, which so profoundly influenced his mind that he has rarely been able to exclude them from the gayest of his works. When others feel or describe, he debates, and the result is that he comes forth always in the guise either of a stern-faced Puritan or of Mrs. Grundy upside down. His best sallies of wit remind us of Sir W. S. Gilbert, a true man of genius. His personages for the most part speak with the voice of Mr. Shaw, their emotions suggest a borough council. But if we may believe Dr. Henderson, Mr. Shaw engrosses the wisdom and nobility of all the ages. For extravagance of advertisement this solid volume has no equal in the annals of literature. It is a pæan to vanity in five hundred pages. Both author and hero seem impervious to the boldest strokes of humour. Once upon a time M. Anatole France was discoursing of men of genius. At the first

silence Mr. Shaw said: 'I know all about them, for I myself am a man of genius.' 'Yes,' replied M. France, 'and a courtesan calls herself a purveyor of pleasure.' The irony of the reproof seems to have escaped both victim and biographer. Poor Mr. Shaw! Who would not pity him? From beginning to end Dr. Henderson shows him beating his own drum. He compares him, always to their disadvantage, with Sophocles, Shakespeare, Renan, and Voltaire. There is one man with whom he may more justly be compared, and that is Barnum.

And vanity at the last is foiled of its purpose. For true and lasting fame comes and goes as it lists. The less Cato coveted glory, says Sallust, the more he got it. So the vain man speedily outlives his notoriety. The mere insistence of his name irritates those who once were his devout worshippers. He has boasted so long of his prowess that none is found complacent enough to applaud him. And he totters from the scene with no other companions than a mirror and a sycophant, stripped at the end of those things which best he has loved, flatterers, photographs, and Press cuttings.

III

THE DANGERS OF ORATORY

The Unions of Oxford and Cambridge may boast a long and distinguished history. Within their walls many an orator who afterwards swayed the Senate learned his first lessons in eloquence and composure. He did not learn them wholly in vain. That the faculty of speech, private or public, should be cultivated in the course of every man's education is just and proper. No one should carry his voice into the wider sphere of political life, without humbly and honestly understanding the dangers of oratory.

The art of speaking, like the art of acting, is an art of personal appeal. The orator uses his mind and reason last of all. He relies for his effects upon his presence, upon the brilliance of his eye, upon the tremulous emotion of his voice. More often than not it is his main purpose to make the worse appear the better argument. Even when he is inspired

with wisdom and rectitude he is forced by the mere excitement of his trade to put whatever is wise and right in a false aspect. He cozens his hearers as Orpheus cozened the trees. He bids them follow him to their undoing as the children followed the Pied Piper of Hamelin into the mountain's side.

And oratory is more harmful than any other art of cozenage, because it befogs the reason and obscures the intelligence. The power of beautiful words fluently uttered cannot be measured by the standards of sense. Archidamus, the King of Lacedæmon, once asked Thucydides which wrestled best in speech, he or Pericles. 'When I have given him an open fall before the face of all the world,' replied Thucydides, 'he can so excellently deny it that he maketh the people believe that he had no fall at all, and persuadeth them the contrary of what they saw.' The tongue of Pericles was, we are told by Plutarch, 'a terrible lightning,' and terribly it shattered the prosperity of Athens. As it blinded the eyes and dulled the ears of those that heard it, so it ensured the ultimate ruin of the State and prepared the disaster of Syracuse. Nor need the lightning of eloquence ever be forked with sense. It may be innocuous, as the

sheet which glimmers in a summer sky, and yet not fail of its effect. He who reduced the House of Commons to an awed silence by the mere repetition of the word 'Sugar' did but carry the craft of orator to its highest power.

It is democracy which eloquence involves in the greatest peril. The people is always sensitive to the impressions of speech. It delights to be swayed hither and thither by a gust of enthusiasm, and it would always prefer a fool with words upon his tongue to the restrained wisdom of a Solomon. Once upon a time an employer of labour reproached the members of a trade union with having a stupid fellow for their paid leader. 'Yes,' replied the trade unionists, 'we know he is stupid, but he can talk, and we like to get something for our money.' It is this desire to get something for its money that makes the people the patient slave of rhetoric. The skilful orator who addresses the mob knows how easily he may lash it to fury or hush it to a sudden calm. Verily the tongue has been a far crueller weapon than the sword. It has devastated countries; it has made the gutters of cities run with blood; it has thrown upon free men heavier chains than the fiercest tyranny could forge.

No country ever suffered more bitterly from eloquence than did England in the nineteenth century. For forty years she was dominated by Mr. Gladstone, a very miracle of verbosity. There was no topic which he could not embellish with his rhetoric. He would overwhelm the simplest controversy with a flood of words. All things were possible to him save a clear statement. To him, it might truly be said, speech was given to darken counsel. No man could hold him to his word, for his word meant all things. There was no position from which he could not extricate himself triumphantly. When he dropped a measure which he had set in the 'forefront' of his policies he thought it was enough to explain that the forefront for him was a line, not a point. The fact that his speeches are unreadable to-day proves how much he depended upon the talents of the histrion—upon a shaking voice and gleaming eye. If only he had gone upon the stage what an actor we should have had! From how much disaster might Britain have been saved!

There comes a moment in the career of every orator when he succumbs to the glamour of his trade, when he must arouse at all hazards the enthusiasm of the mob. We may mark

the downfall of Mr. Gladstone from a simple entry in his journal. 'Somewhat haunted,' he wrote in 1864, after a tour in Lancashire, 'by dreams of halls, lines of people, and great assemblies.' After that confession leadership was impossible for him. In the belief that the people, which flattered him, was always right, he could but give it what it asked, he could but confuse statesmanship with an acquiescence in the popular will. And thus acquiescent, the orator soon ceases to make his own speeches. The voice is his ; the gesture is his ; it is the audience which speaks with his tongue, which thinks with his thought, which emphasises with his restless hands its own opinions. So at the last he becomes a mere mirror, catching the likeness of his environers and borrowing the hues of his fancy from those about him. In the House of Commons he will subdue his nature to a modesty of style and phrase, conscious that he speaks in an assembly which has not lost its last hold upon tradition. If he go north or east he is another man, enslaved by all the foolish extravagances of those who hear him, and whom he stirs to the last madness of excitement because he clothes with rhetoric their own ignorance and lack of thought.

Yet, dangerous as oratory must always prove, it is by oratory alone that we choose our governors. In the most boisterous farce of all time there is nothing more farcical than this. The ruler of a state needs wisdom, balance, and moderation. And we say to him, Can you talk ? Can you rock the populace with mirth or touch it to pathos ? We do not ask that he should give proof of statesmanship, that he should combine a knowledge of the past with a prophetic insight into the future. We expect of him only those qualities which make statesmanship and insight impossible. It is as though we took our gardeners from coral reefs, or thought that he was the best shoemaker who was born and bred in a colony of wooden legs.

The memory of rhetoric is transitory. The orator, like the actor, writes his name in water. He lives only in the immediate effect that he produces on others. Though he may inflict a deep injury upon his own age, to succeeding ages his speeches are but the shadows of words. The noisy applause of the moment finds its compensation in an eternal silence. We would that the young orators of Oxford and Cambridge, reflecting how quickly eloquence passes, might be deterred from the

clamour of the hustings. If they cannot give so practical a proof of their modesty and patriotism, let them cultivate a quiet and parsimonious style, and remember that the only kind of oratory that is not a patent danger to the State is such as was practised by William Pitt, who, as Windham said, could always deliver a King's Speech off-hand.

When an ingenious inventor showed Cæsar a glass which would not break though it were dashed upon the ground, Cæsar loaded him with compliments, and put him to death as a danger to the State. Thus should we treat our unbridled orators, the darlings of the mob. We should listen to their swan-songs with rapture, and then give them the costliest funerals that a lavish state could provide.

IV

THE DECLINE OF THE COCKNEY

THE recovery, by the *Cornhill Magazine*, of Thackeray's *Cockney Travels* recalls to our mind a vanished type. The Cockney as Hazlitt and Thackeray drew him is no more. He is gone from our sight with omnibuses, tea-gardens, cider-cellars, and fives-courts. If we would reconstruct him it is by the processes of archæology. So rapidly does the world change that we must already dig in the past for what was familiar to many not yet arrived at the threshold of old age.

Provincialism was the essence of the Cockney's character. 'Beyond Hyde Park, all was a desert to him.' He was bitterly perplexed by the sounds and sights of the country. The nightingale to his ear was nothing more than a breaker of sleep. He was quite sure that the proper place for blackbirds was a pie-dish. Embarrassed always by what he could not affect to understand, he disliked the scent of

the hay, and saw murder in the cow's large and kindly eye. On the pavement he was supreme. He had a dauntless sense of proprietorship in the city, and heartily despised the mere stranger who wandered, unarmed with knowledge, into its devious ways. London, he believed, hid no secrets from his eyes. He was ready at a moment's notice to pronounce a professional opinion upon her politics, her theatres, and her life. And thus he acquired his peculiar quality of pertness which, for good or evil, still distinguishes him in our memory and in our annals.

Superficial as all men must be who take London for their province, determined at all cost to be humorous, the Cockney, in the last resort, was forced to rely upon catch-words. The gags of the playhouse, the refrain of the last comic song heard at Evans's, served him perforce as the material of his conversation. Unable to supply his own comment upon the varied hotch-potch of life, he would turn to his purpose the meaningless phrases of others, convinced, like the actor in a pantomime, that what is familiar will always raise a laugh. Richard Pinch, haberdasher and fives-player, was, as Hazlitt sketched him, a complete specimen of the Cockney. 'He never has any-

thing to say,' wrote Hazlitt, 'and yet is never at a loss for an answer. . . . His friend the doctor used to complain of this in good set terms. "You can never make anything of Mr. Pinch," he would say. "Apply the most cutting remark to him, and his only answer is, 'The same to you, sir.' . . . He would pose the devil by his 'The same to you, sir.'"'

There in a phrase is the vice of Cockneydom. 'The same to you, sir.' It is fit for all purposes and all occasions. There is no escaping from its inappropriateness. Yet there was much else besides pertness in the Cockney of old. He, too, 'lived in a world of romance,' in a multi-coloured London of his own imagining. The sound of Bow Bells was sweet in his ears. There was gold in the cobble-stones of the streets; there was gold in the brick faces of the houses. The tavern at the corner, kept by an honourably retired pugilist, was a place of pleasanter resort than the noblest palace in the land. Drury Lane was a veritable temple of art, and half-price in the gallery admitted those, rich in its possession, to the privilege of kings. Who, then, should be proud if not the Cockney?

As we look back to the roll of fame we shall find many eminent writers who breathed the

true spirit of Cockneydom. Hazlitt, perhaps, was too keenly appreciative of the Cockney's character to be a Cockney himself. He explained him with so pitiless an analysis that he could not assume his qualities in his own person. So intimate was his knowledge of the country that he looked upon London with a certain self-consciousness. It was not for him to take her perfections for granted or to pass a lenient sentence upon her follies. Yet even Hazlitt caught a whiff of the true Cockney spirit, when he set out from the White Horse cellars on the Bath mail to witness a prize fight. It was but a whiff. Charles Lamb was far more constant to the inspiration of London, whose quiet by-ways he described with the quietude of knowledge, and whose pavements he beat not in surprise but in intimacy, not with the eagerness of a curious visitant but with the insight of one who was a familiar part of what he saw and heard.

When we descend further into the nineteenth century we detect other contrasts, other differences. True child of London as Dickens was, he did not measure the Cockney in his just proportions ; he was never a simple dweller in the world of Cockneydom. He painted the London of his dreams in the

colours of romance. His Cockneys either fall below or rise above the stature of reality. They are heroes or pygmies, not men. Mr. Weller is not so much the driver of a coach as the sublimation of all the drivers that ever were. If Plato's world of ideas exist, then Mr. Weller will be there as the supreme ideal of his kind and class. So, too, the Markiss of Granby is no mere common house of call. It lies in the unbroken line of immemorial taverns, a meeting-place through all eternity of gaiety and humour.

Thackeray, on the other hand, was a genuine Cockney: 'a mutinous Cockney' he called himself. A willing haunter of clubs and supper-rooms, he exemplified in his person all the virtues of Cockneydom, not to say engrossed them. By preference he remained in the neighbourhood of the Garrick Club. If he travelled afield he looked at the unfamiliar sights with the eyes of London. He wondered constantly what the Lord Mayor would have thought of it. In his *Cockney Travels* there is an apposite specimen of his Cockney humour. He tells us of a good-natured woman who ascends the Wind Cliff at Chepstow 'cheerfully for a shilling'; and he pictures the distress which the aldermen of London would feel

before they had climbed a quarter of the steps. Then he imagines the reverse of the medal. 'Try the lady of the Wind Cliff,' says he, 'at some of the duties which hard fate enjoins upon mayors and aldermen! 'Tis probable that a week's turtle would kill her outright.'

Such is the narrow view of life cherished by the travelling and mutinous Cockney. And to-day the Cockney, loyal or mutinous, has ceased to be. Londoners we have in ever-increasing numbers, but no Cockneys. The uniformity of education and the tyranny of railroads have done their work. All the old provincialisms which so pleasantly diversified the life of England are dead and gone. The last real Cockney was the 'bus-driver. His humour was broad and ample as his person, and he found his liveliest foil in the nimble-witted conductor, who, a piece of quick insolence ever on his tongue, slapped the shield of the knife-board with resounding strap. And the 'bus-driver was eminent not only for humour. We mourn him the more sorrowfully because he possessed in full measure the shrewd, if superficial, knowledge of life which belonged to the Cockneys of the great age. Alas! his work is done, his wages taken. How shall we expect humour or

philosophy from the oil-stained mechanic who anxiously holds the wheel of a motor-bus ?

As in life so in letters. Mr. Pett Ridge, who with a profoundly scientific knowledge paints the Londoners of to-day, is as little imbued with the Cockney spirit as are the persons of his dramas. They, indeed, are not Cockneys at all, but merely men and women who happen to live within reach of the tube. They have attended the same schools, they have read the same books as their cousins in Yorkshire or Devon. The cruel hand of uniformity is upon their shoulder. Even the differences of accent which now separate north and south will presently disappear, and we shall be left deploring in a common drabness of mind and speech the sad fact that never again will a pert Cockney interrupt the flow of our wisdom with a superbly irrelevant taunt: 'The same to you, sir.'

V

PROPHETS WITHOUT HONOUR

We have heard a great deal of late concerning class-hatred. Society has been pictured, falsely I think, as a set of ravening mobs, each of which is animated by a jealous fury against those above it. The possession of strength or courage or intelligence has been held a crime against the democracy by those who have them not. And he has been accounted the best citizen who is indistinguishable from his fellows. That this jealousy and this hatred will endure none but the surliest pessimist can believe. After all, malice and envy are not the dominant qualities of human kind, and even if they were there is one excellent reason why they should not always be directed against the poor victims of prosperity and education.

For there is a jealousy ingrained in the hearts of some far stronger than the jealousy of class. The man of the people, as he is called, who emerges from his environment,

need ask and will get no approval and no pity from his kind. If one succeeds, where a thousand fail, that one is acclaimed, most unrighteously, a traitor to his class and his ideals. What right has he, demand his ancient friends, to enjoy a privilege denied to us? Had he been faithful to the trust reposed in him he would still be fighting a hopeless and uncomfortable battle at his comrades' side.

No better illustration of this truth could be found than a book written by Mr. Joseph Burgess on the rise and progress of Mr. John Burns. Mr. Burns is not altogether the brilliant hero painted by his admirers. Few will accept the view of a stalwart panegyrist, who once compared him, in a page of dithyrambic prose, with Henry v. of England. You would find little profit if you bought him at his valuation and sold him at your own. But he has proved, I believe, the industrious head of a department. He has seen in parliamentary life something better than an opportunity of destruction. In brief, the mere touch of practical affairs sobered him mightily, and this sobriety Mr. Joseph Burgess and his colleagues cannot forgive. The very fact that he has travelled from Trafalgar Square to Westminster fills them with fury. A man who

has once been an agitator, they say, should never cease to wave the red flag. His old speeches are cited triumphantly against him, and he is convicted out of his own mouth of changed opinions.

The quarrel which divides Mr. Burns from his early associates need not be discussed. It is interesting only because it throws a ray of light upon one limitation of the human brain. The most of men refuse obstinately to believe in intellectual change. They are certain that all those whom they knew twenty years ago are incapable of growth. How should one whom they remember rough and uneducated be transformed into a Cabinet Minister? Mr. Hyndman recalled a time when Mr. Burns was ignorant and illiterate. There may be some still living who knew Mr. Hyndman before he could read and write. We are not born with the rudiments ready acquired, and that Mr. Burns has made a conquest of his illiteracy is surely not disgraceful. In the same spirit of captiousness Mr. Burgess described a visit which he paid to Mr. Burns many years ago, is astonished that he has dared to shift his outlook in the interval, and blames him for having cast the skin of ancient error. 'Just for a handful of siller he left us, Just for a

riband to stick in his coat,' murmur the disappointed competitors in the game of life. And can they who so hastily condemn declare with sincerity either that they would have refused ' the siller ' had it been offered, or that the rival who has out-distanced them sacrificed his honour for the riband in his button-hole?

Everywhere you may see signs of this strange confusion. As I have said, the average man, devoid of imagination, has a devout faith in the immutability of his kind. Incapable of growth or change himself, he believes that all others are of a like incapacity. For him the human brain is rigid as marble and destined for ever to retain the imperfections of childhood. How often do we hear it said: 'I was at school with A or B, and I am sure that he could not ever have become a statesman or a poet.' So the pious demagogue would condemn a boy brought up in a charity school to remain for ever within its chilly precincts. And they forget, those wiseacres who deny the possibility of change, that whatever else a child may be he is never save to the eye of the clairvoyant the father of the man. The views which he holds in youth of religion or politics are necessarily those which he has caught up

from the friends about him. He may defend them passionately, and as passionately attack them, without incurring the charge of disloyalty. There are some opinions, as there are some countries, which honest men are glad to leave, and talent, above all, should never be bound in the shackles of the past.

Oftentimes the misunderstanding of which I speak is inspired only by simplicity. No touch of malice mars it. If a hobbledehoy sits on the same bench at school with a miracle of intellect, he can neither suspect his future not understand its meaning when it becomes his present. Few men of his generation bore upon him more clearly the marks of genius than one whom I will call Lysander. Now Lysander grew up in the fields. He snatched his learning with both hands, where he could find it. He had neither money in his pocket nor friends to help his necessities. Sustained by his native genius and by a serene confidence in himself, Lysander seized the education which none need miss if he desires it ardently enough, made his way to the university, and became a scholar. Presently he wrote a book which won him the admiration of all good judges and secured his fame. All the world knew him save his own country-

side. Those who had been taught with him in the village school refused to believe that he was in any way changed from the boy that he was, the boy who had seemed to them little different from the others save in the respect which they paid him. And when one who knew Lysander merely as a man of genius visited his home and asked for news of him, he heard no more from the friends of his childhood than that he was a rare hand with a rake in the hayfield.

There we have the amiability of ignorance. No dishonour was done Lysander by his companions. They remembered him for the strength of his arm, which even they could measure. They did not affect to understand his books, which were beyond the compass of their brain. And so he was not confused by their idle flattery into false admiration of himself. He neither exacted nor obtained any homage which might not have been his due. Such, if men only knew it, is the best achievement of all, to do one's work and still to retain in a world of vanity and advertisement the simplicity of youth. No nobler compliment has ever been paid to a man of genius than the compliment paid to Shakespeare by Matthew Arnold. 'And thou whose

head did stars and sunbeams know . . . didst walk on earth unguessed at.' Unguessed at by others, boldly conscious of himself. No destiny could be happier. When Shakespeare, his work done, returned to Stratford, those who remembered his youth knew naught of his triumph. Perhaps they, too, recorded his prowess in the hayfield or on the wrestling-green. It was not for him to boast of his tragedies or to ask the tribute of biographers. There is an ancient rumour that he was wont to sit in the garden of New Place and bandy jests with the passers-by. If the rumour be true we shall search the annals of literature in vain for a finer piece of irony.

VI

THE VICE OF IMPARTIALITY

It is characteristic of our weak-kneed generation that it is loud in the praise of the negative virtues. The courage and resolution which would maintain an unpopular opinion or fight for a losing cause long ago went out of fashion. At the first hint of battle we murmur compromise, and we find an easy solace in the sad discretion which always avoids a plain issue. So it is that we take a pride in impartiality, the ingrained vice of the timid, and we hail him as a hero who, resisting the impulse of brain and temper, looks upon both sides of every question. If this be heroism, it is the heroism of the chameleon, which preserves life by assuming the colour of its environment.

There is but one class upon which impartiality is imposed as the first and last of virtues —the judges. To hold the scales of justice with an even hand they must divest them-

selves of passion and sentiment. They must turn a deaf ear to the threats of interested demagogues. They must withstand the fierce tyranny of universal suffrage. Outside the domain of justice there is small excuse for impartiality. Nature, like war, is never impartial. 'Red in beak and claw,' she wreaks her vengeance as she will, sparing here, destroying there. The hailstorm which tears your garden to shreds leaves unharmed your neighbour's orchard.

And when we turn from wild nature to the human race, we shall find none so miserably ineffective as the man who regards himself and his actions with an impartial eye. This sad personage is familiar to us all. Forced by an inveterate habit of self-analysis to consider whatever he does, as though another did it, he acts, if he act at all, without energy and without conviction. More frequently he is reduced to a state of stable equilibrium, because he sees too clearly the good and evil of every thought and deed. If he be a scholar, he will keep a rigid silence, because he dare not give a hostage to fortune. If he essay politics, he will reject the principles of either party in a time of stress, because his impartiality reveals to him the dangers which lurk in both policies.

Thus he will go through his life colourless and ashamed, and when the end comes he will slip out of life rather than die, since the act of death seems over-violent to his nicely balanced mind, too clear a proof of the partiality which he abominates.

This impartiality leads, by a straight road, to indifference. He who looks at both sides of a question with equal approval is sure in the end that nothing matters. He will accept an affront offered to himself or his country and merely shrug an impartial shoulder. Secure in what he holds is a double vision, he will lay aside the duties and privileges of patriotism. The best evidence of detachment that he can give is to denounce his own country. Charles James Fox, when he rejoiced in the success of the French or American arms, fondly believed that he had laid aside for ever the vices of the partisan. He did not understand that it was merely cannibalism, inspiring him to a meal of his own kind. And the pro-Boers, who a decade of years since painted in glowing colours the ‘ crimes ’ of England, were confident in their superiority over others. They thanked God that they were not swayed by a superstitious love of their own land. So they began by acknowledging the valour of the

Boers, and ended by detecting only villainy in the courage of Englishmen.

Such is the height of dangerous folly to which indifference leads its dupes. And no less dangerous than the impartiality of life is the impartiality of history. Of late years the professors have told us that no record of the past is of the smallest value if it be not impartial. Lord Acton once quoted Ranke approvingly as one who taught history 'to be critical, to be colourless, and to be new.' When Acton designed the Cambridge Modern History, 'our scheme,' said he, 'requires that nothing shall reveal the country, the religion, or the party to which the writer belongs.' It would be impossible to invent a more dismal scheme. Even the historian is a man coloured by prejudice and self-will. If he divest himself of his prejudices, he divests himself of his talent also. He changes from a thinking, sentient being to a lifeless register of lifeless facts. And even then, when he has sacrificed all his gifts that he may attain a frigid impartiality, he fails completely. The impartiality of barren facts is destroyed at once by the order in which they are stated, by the artful suppressions, which even a man of stone cannot avoid. It is a selection of news, not

the angry comment, which creates the power of the newspaper. And the orthodox historian, who boasts that his text is as colourless as an unblotted sheet, may pack the superstitions of all the ages into an index.

And were the life and individuality of the historian rigorously expelled from the printed page there would be nothing left to hold our interest. History is an interpretation of the past as seen through another's temperament. If dead heroes are to live again it must be by the imagination of the historian. Of course, there are certain rules of the game to be observed. The truth must not be concealed; falsehoods may not be invented. That is to say, the historian, like any other artist, must be a reasonably honest man. But when all reservations are made, the judgment of another must always come between us and the past.

The test of experience agrees with the test of reason. All the great histories that we know are the works of partisans. The collections of documents which are said to-day to be the only true history are read only by impartial historians. Herodotus and Thucydides, Livy and Tacitus, Macaulay and Gibbon were one and all men of violent

prejudice and eloquent exposition. It was not history but their own view of history that they wished to set forth. There is not a page of their works that is not informed by prejudice and coloured by fancy. They speak with their own, not with borrowed voices, and the past becomes intelligible to us because we see it with their eyes, vivified like a moving picture.

It is the Whigs who clamour most loudly for what they call 'impartiality.' And by a familiar paradox it is the Whigs who have most successfully taught the lesson of politics in the guise of history. While denouncing as a shameless pamphleteer any man who has dared to present the case of the Tories, they have annexed the province of English history for their own. No one has done so much as Macaulay to ensure the momentary triumph of Radical opinions. Green has come valiantly to the aid of Macaulay. The makers of text-books have patiently followed their masters, and English history as it is taught in our schools is a mere excuse for 'Liberal' doctrine. Nor is there any sane Tory who would blame the Radicals for their forethought. The sane Tory will rather reflect with pleasure that the undisputed reign of the Whigs in the domain

of history is over. Wiser books are being published which will give to the youth of England a just view of the past and of the present. They make no pretence of impartiality; their partisanship is as strong as Macaulay's own; happily it is a partisanship not of the Whigs but of the Tories. Meanwhile we cannot too gravely condemn the prevailing impartiality in life as in letters. Its origin is obvious and twofold. It comes either of the scepticism which holds all things wrong, or of the facile insincerity which holds all things right. Defying the experience of all the ages, it demands that the head shall be the supreme judge of conduct and morality. But 'the wisest thoughts,' said the philosopher, 'come from the heart,' and the heart was ever a partisan.

VII

THE CLASSICS AND A CAREER

There is no one in the world so fiercely dogmatic as the apostle of change. With nothing save first principles to aid him, he is ready to outrage the accumulated wisdom of all the ages. He lives in an atmosphere of reckless experiment, and yet refuses to accept responsibility for the evil that he does. His ignorance is complete and invincible; his pride matches his ignorance. For him, whatever is is wrong, and so little respect does he cherish for the past that he thinks himself competent to devise a hundred schemes for the regeneration of the race.

It is not often that we are fortunate enough to see the beginning and end of a loudly trumpeted reform. That good fortune is ours to-day. During the last few years the humanities have been assailed in France with peculiar bitterness. That light-witted country, whose custom it is to question all

things, to proceed gaily from false premises to a logical conclusion, has succeeded at last in the practical suppression of the dead languages. In her *lycées* and universities she has resolved to teach nothing that will not be of use to her pupils in their future career. The formula is perfectly familiar to us. We may now measure the havoc that has been wrought by its parrot-like repetition.

In obedience to popular clamour, the professors of France resolved to replace the literary education, which had held sway for centuries, by a study of exact science. They kept sternly in view the demands of counting-house and workshop. We will not train the boy's mind, said they; we will pack his brain with useful facts. He shall not think; he shall remember. Strictly cut off from a knowledge of the past, he shall live solely in the present. Thus there will be no waste of force. A full pocket shall reward his industry, and if his head is empty of those general ideas which cumbered his father's, so much the better for him. He will get rich the more quickly.

A vain hope, which has not been realised. The abolition of the humanities in France has been followed by an ominous decay in the

national intelligence. The utilitarian system of education, which was to increase tenfold the 'efficiency' of France, has proved a disastrous failure. The calculating machine beloved to-day is no proper substitute for a thinking, sentient man. In the craft of letters the deficiency is the most conspicuous. After all, the humblest writer cannot expect success without some knowledge of the instrument which he uses, and it is only through the 'dead languages' that we may arrive at an understanding of those which still live. Many years ago Matthew Arnold declared that the journey-work of literature was far better done in France than in England, and he attributed the superiority to the influence of Richelieu's famous academy. Alas! the influence of the academy, vastly overrated by Matthew Arnold, is to-day dead or dying; and the suppression of Latin and Greek has removed the last check which was laid upon the careless misuse of the French tongue. If we praise the journalism of modern Paris, we praise it as those who find a magnificence in the half-understood. French is not so stubborn a language as English. The novice may write it with a facility which looks at first sight as though it were genuine. Ever since Voltaire revealed his method to an

eager world, a set of stock phrases, *clichés* they call them, has been at the service of any one who can afford a fountain pen. Unfortunately the mind, undisciplined by the study of Latin and Greek, does not understand the stock phrases which the fountain pen traces mechanically upon paper. Never was there so rash and careless a creature as the French journalist. Knowing no other speech than his own, he cannot refrain from embellishing his periods with Latin and English tags. He is equally persuaded that 'Times is money,' and that 'Business ares business.' There is never a year passes in which that mythical province Manu Militari does not fall a willing booty to his pen and ink. It is always his pleasure to 'adjourn the Chamber, *sine die*, to the 16th instant.'

It is here, indeed, that the French journalist is most painfully deficient. Knowing not Latin, which is the mother of French, he does not understand the origins and associations of the phrases he employs. It is not clear to him (how should it be ?) that words, like ancient houses or the faces of men and women, are marked and scarred by their past history. The science which was to have saved his soul alive has not taught him to think or given him

the rudiments of style. Reckless of analysis, he confuses his images with the abandonment of an Irishman. But there is a vast difference between his mixed metaphors and Irish 'bulls.' The humour of an Irish 'bull' is always half conscious. When Sir Boyle Roche said, 'I smell a rat; I see it hurtle through the air; but I will nip it in the bud,' he achieved a stroke of genius. He joyfully paraded his own extravagance. There was no pride in the French reporter who solemnly declared the other day that 'Mme. Judic's talent was like a bottle of ink in which the scalpel must not be used too freely for fear of finding there only a pinch of cinders.' That is the folly of an illiterate man who has never been taught to think or to see in words anything more than lifeless symbols.

But it is not the men of letters who denounce most bitterly the evil influence of 'practical' education. It is the men of science, the engineers, the captains of industry. The makers of steel, the inspectors of mines, the chiefs of the medical schools unite in a protest against the tyranny of science. They have discovered what they should have known from the beginning, that humane letters are the best training even for those who are destined to earn their

bread in a factory. Discipline of mind and a clear habit of thought are necessary in the counting-house as in the study ; and when the chief of a vast steel works publicly petitions the Minister of Education to bring back the study of Latin and Greek into the schools, because without them he cannot obtain efficient engineers, here is an argument for the classics which even those will understand who look no further than 'the boy's future career.'

It has been discovered, moreover, that the modern languages are no proper substitute for the ancient. The German and English taught in French schools are commercial and no more. They do not help those who study them to cultivate what gift of expression they may possess. They do no more than accentuate the one-sidedness of modern education, and if the Minister of Public Education turn a deaf ear to those who petition him, the taste, the fancy, the sense of style, which have always been the peculiar glory of France, will survive only in the rare manifestations of genius.

Here, then, is a loud and eloquent warning for us all. France has made the experiment of 'practical' education, and it has failed pitifully. At the very moment of France's failure our wiseacres are urging us to follow

her dangerous example. That eminent apostle of culture, Mr. Andrew Carnegie, has told us that Greek is of no more use than Choctaw. His colleagues of the steel trade in France do not agree with him, and as they speak with the voice of experience we prefer to place our trust in them. In the battle of intelligence the dry bones of arithmetic will be defeated always by the living force of the dead languages. He who would save his soul will assuredly lose it. And the sad ambition of learning to acquire wealth even in the class-room is doomed to disappointment. For once the pleasantest path is also the most profitable. To pass his youth in Arcady is the wisest preparation even for a metallurgist.

VIII

THE FIREMAN'S COURAGE

THERE were certain episodes in the destruction by fire of the Carlton Hotel which no spectator will ever forget. When a thick column of smoke, the herald of destruction, had risen high above the roof, a dark figure stood out for a moment against the sky and then passed beyond the reach of danger to the roof of His Majesty's Theatre. This figure was followed by others, men and women. In the full sight of the vast crowd which stood below, they gained the region of safety without haste or speed, each one waiting his turn in perfect tranquillity of mind. There was no rivalry of escape, no pushing to be first beyond the risk of death. There they walked simply and quietly as though they were going about the plain business of their lives. You could not see their silhouettes, sharply outlined against the sky, without a lively emotion. And how near and instant was their danger was made

evident by the flames, which in a second enveloped the space which they had traversed.

And this was but the first act in a drama of courage and resource. No sooner had the fugitives escaped from the burning roof than the brave firemen took their place in the public eye. One unnamed hero, having ascended to the top of the highest ladder, was shot by some unseen device into the eye of the burning window. Even at the very moment that he seemed to be hung in mid-air he checked the progress of the flames. It was as though he were endowed with senses and faculties denied to other men. To keep his poise at that height above the thronged and silent street was enough for glory. To fight the flames without visible foothold was a miracle of human courage and endurance.

And in the street the firemen worked everywhere with swift determination. They betrayed no signs of bustle or of speed. They went about their toil with a sureness of purpose, a certainty of aim, which filled at least one spectator with amazement and respect. They unwound their hose, they fixed it to the pumps, like men performing a well and often rehearsed part. They inspired you with a confidence that no life would be lost, no

property endangered, by their bungling. You knew that they wasted not a second, and yet you saw no signs of disquieting haste. To save time at such a moment is to lose it, and so easily were these men masters of themselves that never once did they permit anxiety to get the better of knowledge. For two hours the hand-to-hand encounter lasted. The flames, checked in one place, broke out in another, to be quenched instantly. No device from the blazing enemy baffled the firemen. Now you saw their helmets gleam on the very summit of the roof, where not a second before a furnace of flames leaped and raged. Now they were fighting the subtle strength of stupefying smoke. Their victory, certain from the first, was at last achieved. And when the flames were extinguished, when the column of smoke rose no longer above the roof, those who witnessed the combat could not choose but take a pride in the bravery, the coolness, and the resource of the victors.

Here indeed is the true courage, to look fear in the eye and not to lose mastery of yourself. The brave man, if he be not wholly without imagination, knows what it is to be frightened in the presence of danger. What he does not know is how to obey the voice of terror.

'There is nothing doth sooner cast us into dangers,' says Montaigne, 'than an inconsiderate greediness to avoid them.' And the brave man, refusing to avoid dangers, yet takes a just measure of them. It is not for him to make light of what lies before him. That is not the way to surmount difficulties. Recognising the enormity of his risk, and controlling his fear with the hand of courage, he does what is right calmly and without excitement. Such was the bravery of those who, with well-ordered serenity, made their escape from the burning hotel.

If there is one quality which is conspicuous in our firemen it is sanity. Sane are they in deed and method. To watch them at work is to take pride in the fact that they are your compatriots. No care of self mars their sacrifice. Almost alone in a blatant age, they have no thought of advertisement. They give themselves to their beneficent craft without the hope of vulgar fame. It is enough that they should do their duty unflinchingly. To save life and to overcome the fiercest foe that man can fight is sufficient reward for them. They seem as remote from politics as from pretence.

Once upon a time the sanity which dis-

tinguishes the fireman at his work was the common inheritance of Englishmen. It used to be said, and with truth, that England's safety lay in the conservative instincts of her citizens. They were incapable of revolution, we were told, and were always ready to call a halt when their leaders went too far on the downward path. Alas! what was true once is true no longer. The ancient sanity is dead. Our reckless agitators, for their own base purposes, have preached the doctrine of class-hatred with so gross a ferocity that the people has lost control of itself and of its wits. It connives at revolution with an ease, which proves that it no longer takes a pride in its country and its traditions. With a careless apathy it witnesses the destruction of whatever is comely and of good report. It has been told that nothing matters but a full cupboard, and it has learnt the baleful lesson all too readily.

Thus it is that when we see a brave deed bravely accomplished we can best measure the injury done to us by the politicians. The ignorant men who have heard from a hundred platforms that nothing is of importance save their own animal comfort, that every one better educated than they and more richly

endowed is their deadly enemy, can never take just views of life or policy. Fed on flattery like the kings of old, they think that nothing becomes them well, save idleness. Without a thought they let their hastily given votes destroy the institutions which have endured to our triumph a thousand years. That they will find out their mistake when an empty treasury and a desperate foe reduces them to starvation is possible. But sanity will return too late. In vain will they be asked to defend a land desolated by revolution.

And what of the demagogues who, to preserve their majorities, have ruined so much excellent material as once existed in England? They, too, still cling to a half-belief in British sanity. They hope that the evil which they do to-day may be counteracted by the sound character which once belonged to their dupes. A foolish hope! He who sets the wheel of revolution whirling cannot stop it when he will. The great courage which once was England's still lives in the breast of the fireman. But of what use is he to a modern democracy? He is content to do his duty. He cannot shout with raucous voice in a mob of dockers. He cannot hang, a willing slave, upon the lips of the noisy agitator.

IX

THE SPECTACULAR MAN

An American citizen, famous for the minute, was once hailed by an appreciative Press as 'the most spectacular young man in U.S.A.' It is a vast compliment, commensurate with the vast country which devised it, and, I have no doubt, totally undeserved. It is not within the compass of any man to make a spectacle of himself, to go through life as though he were the centre of an applauding ring. Yet the solitary hero who succeeds in climbing the sunlit peaks of publicity does not deserve ill of his fellows, so long as he is content with advertisement for its own sake, and makes no attempt to meddle in the affairs of State. At least he illumines our grey world with a flash of picturesqueness, and reminds the serious ones that life need not lose all its glamour even in an age of speed.

What, then, is a spectacular man? He is one who lives always on parade, who takes up

a larger space than others, who cannot walk abroad without attracting to himself the attention of all men. The greatest of his kind needs no extravagant trappings to enhance his gifts. His mere appearance is enough to excite and satisfy the passion of curiosity. For many years the spectacle of Wellington walking, in simple attire, along Piccadilly aroused the interested enthusiasm of the people. The eyes which followed his progress were attracted less by any outward show than by a consciousness of what he was and what he had done. The victor of Waterloo surely needed a greater share of the pavement, a deeper obeisance, than those to whom it was not given to save their country.

The greatest of men delight in spectacle as no more than an incidental embellishment of their career. It is a necessity of kingship, especially in an age, like our own, which is miscalled an age of reason. The common mind, which has been taught to despise authority, still trembles before pomp, and the divinity which once hedged a king is now most wisely translated into ceremonial pageantry and grandiose processions. In earlier times many brave heroes of Church and State have expressed in noble spectacles the grandeur of

their mind. Do you remember the splendid apparition of Cardinal Wolsey ? 'And after Mass,' says his biographer, 'he would issue out apparelled all in red, in the habit of a Cardinal ; which was either of fine scarlet or else of crimson satin, taffety, damask, or caffa, the best that he could get for money ; he had also a tippet of fine sables about his neck ; holding in his hand a very fair orange, whereof the meat or substance within was taken out, and filled up again with the part of a sponge, wherein was vinegar, and other confections against the pestilent airs, the which he most commonly smelt on to, passing among the press, or else when he was pestered with many suitors.' Every word of this description enhances the impression of drama and display. And though the Cardinal's scarlet vest well became him, Wolsey could never have been aught save spectacular. Habited in a hair shirt and a bedesman's gown he would have drawn all eyes triumphantly upon him.

To some spectacle is a relaxation. Pascal, philosopher though he was, delighted to ride in his coach behind six horses. The natural aristocracy of his mind persuaded him that the trappings of honour were his by right. To others the whole duty and purpose of man may

be summed up in magnificence. Deprive Pascal of his six horses and you would still leave him his profound wisdom, his incomparable art. Take away his outward splendour from D'Orsay and you would reveal the poor, fumbling amateur. As D'Orsay drove away in his tilbury from Kensington Gore, resplendent in parti-coloured waistcoat and gorgeous neck-cloth, he appeared to the groundlings an Apollo of grace and beauty. When he threw a jest across the gaming-table or lavished the wealth of his sympathy—the only wealth that was his—upon his friends he rose to the height of his outward nobility. But his drawings and his verses were mere incidents in the life of the beau, and it is by spectacle, and spectacle alone, that we must measure his claim to immortality.

And none will grudge the dandies and the beaux, the true apostles of display, their proper meed of praise. They at least put a gay interpretation upon life, and inspired even the dullest of their friends with a love for what was comely and of good report. Their patriotism may not have been active, but at least they did no harm to the State. Content to be supreme in their own circle (or circus), they cherished no foolish ambition to play

the loftier rôles of statesman or general. All the amateurs of a spectacular life are not thus modest. Many men there have been who have used their power of displacement for the worst ends, who, having called attention to themselves by some trick of dress, deportment, or speech, have forthwith claimed the right to injure their country. We are all familiar with the incompetent man who knows how to emerge from the crowd, and who goes through life demanding to be accepted at his own price. With a dangerous skill he makes a vivid picture of himself, as he pretends to be, and he is found fit by an idle world for any enterprise. That he fails ingloriously does him but a small disservice. Another chance of distinction is found, and again he fails. But fame and pensions alike pursue him, and he dies rich and honoured, because he is endowed with the invaluable gift of forcing upon others a spectacular illusion.

Such a one does harm on a small scale. When a genius for spectacle is joined with an over-weening ambition, the good or evil that follows is immeasurable. The hero, richly endowed, who uses display as a stepping-stone, may mount to the topmost pinnacle of glory or descend to the abyss of ruin. No man was

ever more highly gifted with the arts which decorate life than Alcibiades. He was handsome, rich, well born, witty, and a philosopher. There was that atmosphere about him which attracted the notice and admiration of his fellows. He could do nothing unseen or unrecognised. His very sense of a gracious life won him the worship and suffrages of the people. Not content with being a dandy and an artist, he aspired to a high command. He fell from the height of power. He who had seemed a miracle of wisdom to Socrates was disgraced by the mob. His vanity henceforth could find satisfaction nowhere else than in the ruin of his fatherland, and he died in exile and a traitor. To a far wiser and nobler end did Benjamin Disraeli turn his equal genius of display. For him spectacle was the necessary prelude of a career. He could not force his talents upon the stern minds of the British aristocracy without employing all the resources of self-advertisement. The two canes which he carried at Gibraltar, the astonishing costumes, in which he masqueraded through the East, the marvellous waistcoats of green and crimson, the festoons of gold which he carried, like a man 'hanging in chains,' as a wit said, were all parts of a definite

and purposed scheme. And the scheme was amply justified: Disraeli knew himself fit for governance, and used the means proper to his ambitious ends. Had he never been Prime Minister, he would still have been a finished dandy, and it is his greatest glory that when the power came to him he did not misuse it. But his is a dangerous example, and perhaps the spectacular hero is more safely employed in the hiring of special trains and in spending his money upon the soft delights of Chicago, than in attempting to govern his country with no weightier reputation than rests upon the invention of a cravat.

X

'WHAT TO EXPECT OF SHAKESPEARE'

'What to expect of Shakespeare,' that is the question asked by M. Jusserand, who like a true Elizabethan combines the professions of literature and diplomacy, in the first of the lectures on Shakespeare delivered before the British Academy. Each one will answer the question according to his temper and intelligence. Hartley Coleridge, being a wise man, found in Shakespeare's plays the hand of a Tory and a gentleman. Others, less happily guided, discover therein nothing but Bacon. There is hellebore for these. The intrepid spirits who lead 'the march of intellect' are frankly disappointed in their expectation. They look to Shakespeare as to one another for an answer to the obvious conundrums of life. And the dog does not help them. He has a hearty contempt for what they call problems. The vestry man's ideal is not for him. He prefers the life of men and women to the antics of

municipal councillors. The earnest soul will consult his pages in vain for guidance on the question of marriage. His contempt for the people is sincere and loudly expressed. His opinion of Jack Cade must make Dr. Clifford, the obsequious subject of 'King Lloyd George,' writhe with fury. Truly Shakespeare is not for those who stand in what they foolishly believe the vaward of progress. He wrote not for a cultivated suburb, nor a garden city, but for the world; not for an age of self-satisfied zealots, but for all time.

When M. Jusserand considers what we shall expect of Shakespeare, there is one question which he cannot put by. 'What is the moral effect of his plays?' It is the old combat between art and morality. Shall the poet instruct or amuse, or shall he set out on the hopeless quest of doing both, of being merry and wise in a breath? Shakespeare has fared somewhat roughly at the hands of the moralists, who ask of every one that he should 'do good.' 'He omits opportunities of instructing,' says Dr. Johnson, 'which the train of his story seems to force upon him.' Emerson, as we should expect, confesses himself dissatisfied. 'And now,' he asks, 'how stands the account of man with the bard and

benefactor, when, in solitude . . . we seek to strike the balance ? . . . When the question is to life, and its materials, and its auxiliaries, how does it profit me ? What does it signify ? It is but a Twelfth Night, or a Midsummer Night's Dream, or a Winter Evening's Tale : what signifies another picture more or less ? '

To put such a question to a poet is the last act of injustice. No man should seek to gather thistles from roses. Though every nation should jealously guard its inviolate morality, it should not demand of its writers a course of persistent and pedantic repression. It should not be always on the alert to 'improve.' However high its standard may be, however rigid its scruple of observance, it should allow itself some holidays, and poetry is for the holiday mood, for the soul set free from the cares of imperious instruction. And after all his morality must be most infirmly established, who can never for a moment dispense with fortifying sentiments, who catches infection from words, and who translates into act the images of the poet. Such a poor soul should avoid the page of history, lest Nero tempt him to crime, or Napoleon to tyranny.

There is another reason why the poet should not be asked to enforce the resolution of the

weaker brethren. The maxims which are found beneficial are perforce trite and obvious. To tell the world to be virtuous and happy is not enough for poetry. Even if we pierce the truth a little deeper, and proclaim that he will do no wrong who is sincere to himself and to others, we are still on the level plains of prose. Now a poet is intent to express his own thoughts, to paint his own pictures, and he cannot find a proper exercise for his craft in putting together the commonplaces of life and thought which serve the erring for philosophy. The late Martin Tupper was a highly respectable old gentleman who devoutly believed it his duty 'to make the world better.' And doubtless he made it better. But he was not a poet, and it is idle to ask of Shakespeare that he should vie in moral excellence with the author of *Proverbial Philosophy.*

This common injustice done to Shakespeare and his compeers is less easy to defend because it is inflicted upon the poets alone. The heroes of the other arts are free to handle their material and to express their fancy as they will. They are not bidden to keep one eye upon an ancient copy-book. We do not seek to feed our moral natures from a contemplation of painting and sculpture. The inscrut-

able Fates, who brood upon the pediment of the Parthenon, are not asked to enrich us with a maxim. We do not expect to get a 'tip' in conduct from the exquisite pose of Titian's 'Man with the Glove.' Yet the aims and processes of all the arts are the same. There is nothing to mark poetry off from the others save that, by an accident, words, which are its material, are the material also of speech and sermon.

That Shakespeare should escape the inapposite question was impossible. We cannot be too grateful to M. Jusserand for giving it a clear and final answer. He confesses the unpopular truth that Shakespeare's plays were 'written without any moral purpose.' And therefore we must expect of Shakespeare something which Martin Tupper could never give us. We expect, and we are not disappointed, harmony of thought and sound, beautiful words, haunting melodies, profound insight, and, above all, living men and women. Shakespeare has peopled his world with kings and queens, sinners and saints, clowns and philosophers, women of beauty and lovers of heroic temper. They breathe, and speak, each one of them with his own voice. They are not the mouthpieces of Shakespeare's

whim. He pulls no string that they may dance to his bidding. When he had created them he left them to their own thoughts, their own actions. And for this very reason, that they are detached from their creator, they compel belief. The wise know them as they know their friends, better than they know themselves.

And he has achieved this triumph of creation because he has suppressed himself. He does not force his trivial habits upon us, like the witlings of these days. He stands apart, impartial and austere. Even his religious faith is kept secret from our prying minds. He is supreme in his very nonchalance. 'Others abide our question; he is free.' And if he has not stooped to the trite commonplaces beloved of the vulgar, he has opened the eyes of those who can see to a world of beauty and wisdom. 'We want the poet, the musician, the artist,' says M. Jusserand, 'to touch us with his wand and say "Look."' Shakespeare has touched us with his wand, and that is lesson enough for us. Let us not be gluttons of morality lest we die of a surfeit. And let us remember that while art can do without moralising, moralising, expressed in literature, cannot live without art. If the discourses of Donne and

Jeremy Taylor have survived from their times into ours, it is not merely because they convey the loftiest instruction, but because they are clothed with the splendour of an imperishable eloquence.

XI

THE ROAD OVER THE HILL

THERE is a picture in the National Gallery, painted by John Crome and called 'Mousehold Heath.' Noble in its simplicity, it shows a wide expanse of sky and moor. All the mystery of the work—and what great work ever lacked mystery?—lies in the road, which threads the heath-land, now falling out of sight as the hill dips to a hollow, now reappearing, until it is lost in the dimness of the far horizon. Whither it goes you know not. In every turn and twist of it there is an unanswered question. So long as paint and canvas endure, the path will fall and rise mysteriously over Mousehold Heath, and to read aright the riddle of the road is to read the riddle of life.

The road over the hill—these five words sum up whatever mankind knows and feels of romance. The two horsemen whom the popular novelist sends riding along it do but

cheapen its interest. We ask only that it should wander, white and vacant, out of our sight. Let our speculation be unsatisfied. The most brilliant reality can never surpass our dreams in colour and surprise. The vividest memories which we bring back from our travels are memories of roads lost in half-veiled distances. On the other side of the hill stands the most splendid castle in Spain. Though our eyes cannot see it, we know that it is there, and are content, since only the infidel or the man of affairs would put his vision to the test.

For it is not merely the romance of life, but the practice of life also, which depend upon the road over the hill. Those who would win the favour of the goddess Success must set aside dreams and discover for themselves what lies beyond them. There, indeed, is half the art of war. Once upon a time Wellington was travelling with Croker on the North Road, and they amused themselves by guessing what sort of a country they would find over the ridge. Croker was astonished at the certainty with which the duke surmised what was coming. 'Why,' said he, 'I have spent all my life in trying to guess what was at the other side of the hill.' And thereafter

he added: 'All the business of war, and indeed all the business of life, is to endeavour to find out what you don't know by what you do; that is what I call guessing what is at the other side of the hill.'

Thus it is that from the beginning of time roads have been the avenue of empire, the pathways of victory. There is but one way to subdue a country, and that is to unite its cities with fair and even roads. Happy are the lands which Cæsar conquered! Henceforth their inhabitants were united by an easy and familiar intercourse. All the obstacles which once lay in the way of their trade or pleasure were removed. From York to Rome and thence to Jerusalem there went a white chain of measured miles, upwards of three thousand five hundred, along which travelled the whole civilised world to satisfy its greed or curiosity. To effect this, says Gibbon, 'mountains were perforated and bold arches thrown over the broadest and most rapid streams.' And so solidly built were the Roman highways that they have outlived the arms and arts of their builders, and survive to-day, with the invincible fabric of Roman law, for the profit and the glory of once conquered peoples. 'Their primary object,' as

the historian says, 'had been to facilitate the marches of the legions.' To-day they are content to bring Edinburgh within a few hours of London, and to unite in the bonds of amiable society Italy and France.

And roads never change. The houses which front them fall from splendour to decay. An altered fashion turns palaces to hovels. The ruthless hand of the destroyer abolishes every trace even of the foundations. The mighty oaks which have grown from acorns by the wayside wither with age. But the road still goes over the hill, crosses the valley, and climbs the mountain on the other side, white and indestructible. Here, in truth, is one irrefragable link with the past. If we could recover the pageant of the high-road we could recover the pageant of England. The Normans followed the Romans along Watling Street. The footpads of Tudor times were free of the same road. There, in a later age, flew the famous mail-coach, carrying tidings of victory. And to-day the swift motor-cars go past us in a flash, travelling by 'culinary process.' Thus all is changed—manners, costume, mind, means of progress. Only the road remains, unalterable, winding, twisting, mounting as it did when the

Roman legionaries marched from London to York.

But though the road itself is unchanged, peace has fallen upon it. Time was when it was the battle-ground of rich and poor, when the adventurer sought his living there, as to-day he seeks it in the new countries across the sea. When, in Henry VIII.'s reign, the land fell into the hands of new owners, the roads were packed with an ever-moving throng of rogues and vagabonds, decayed householders and masterless men. Living by petty theft, they levied a toll upon solitary wayfarers and lonely houses. If they fell into the clutch of justice they were branded first and presently hanged. Did they escape their enemies, they were promoted to be rufflers or upright men or priggers of prancers, and so became a terror upon every road in England. By degrees the masterless loafers disappeared from our highways, which in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were the peculiar haunt of brave, well-mounted rascals who cried 'Stand and deliver,' at Hounslow or Bagshot, in Maidenhead Thicket or on Shooter's Hill. They pursued their craft with great skill and in strict accord with their own laws. They were witty, courteous, at

times even generous. They held up coach or post-chaise with determination and good manners, and that the roads should not be disturbed by idle brawling their victims thought it a point of honour not to resist. Thus robbery on the highway became a dignified pursuit, and Captain Hind seemed as courtly a gentleman as any cavalier of them all.

Then commerce seized the road, purged of its freebooters, and the gig of the bagman travelled in comfort. And Palmer's mail-coaches, which devoured ten miles in an hour and never fell five minutes behind their time, were the wonder of the age. And Macadam, coming to Palmer's aid, gave him roads worthy his Highflyer, until, at the moment of its culmination, the coach was banished for ever by the railway train. Instantly the roads of England decayed. Where once two coaches could pass one another at full speed the green grass encroached. Hedges were advanced stealthily by hungry farmers. The wayside inns, once the glory of the land, were closed or turned to unworthy purposes. In brief, the use of the road, with all its multiform activities, perished utterly, and then the coming of the motor-car called it back to life.

Each nation has the roads which it deserves. By their roads you shall know them. The highway of France, lucid and logical as the French mind, is always obedient to rule and compass. It is drawn as straight as a line can make it. It has no other object than to get from one point to another as quickly as possible. The English road turns as it will, seeking speed less than surprise. Thus it corresponds to the English temper, which still prefers originality to order. And we have the best warrant for taking pride in what seems to the stranger an eccentricity. 'Improvement makes straight roads,' said Blake, 'but the crooked roads, without improvement, are roads of genius.'

XII

BIOGRAPHY

WHAT is the object of biography? To satisfy the commemorative instinct, says Sir Sidney Lee. This obvious statement throws no light upon a rare and difficult art. As its materials lie in the past, biography calls to mind those who are no more; it persuades the dead to speak. So much is true. And when we have admitted this truth we have not advanced a single step on the path of comprehension.

With the rest of Sir Sidney's commentary it is impossible to agree. The 'primary business' of biography, he says, 'is to be complete.' Completeness is no part of a biographer's aim. A fragment may tell us far more than a finished piece of pedantry. Xenophon's sketch of Socrates, arbitrary as it is in choice of material, reveals the philosopher to us with a clarity which names, dates, and lists of achievements could never attain. Again, Sir Sidney Lee is certain that the theme of biography must be

'serious' and 'of a certain magnitude.' It need be neither. In the hands of a master the meanest theme will appear sufficient. Clowns are neither uncommon nor romantic, yet Dickens's *Life of Grimaldi* will outlast all the lives of archbishops and prime ministers that labouring scholars have given us.

Biography, in truth, like all the other arts, has no other aim than its own perfection. If it be properly understood it does not make for edification. It strives neither to convert nor convince. Its one and indivisible purpose is to achieve in words the portrait of man or woman. As its merit may not be measured by the nobility of the man or woman, who is its theme, so it need not lay too much stress upon the official actions of hero and heroine. It should be its definite purpose to separate the individual from his class, to show in what respects he differed from his rivals, not in what respects he resembled them. It does not tell us anything about Mr. Gladstone to report that on such a day he went to Windsor and 'kissed hands' on his appointment as First Lord of the Treasury. That is the general habit of prime ministers. When we hear that he solaced his leisure by the cutting down of trees, and that he strengthened his

voice by drinking a mysterious liquid from a gallipot, we discover facts, at once individual and characteristic.

And nothing is useless to the biographer that is characteristic. It is for this that he should seek early and late. He should not disdain the gossip of contemporaries nor the anecdotage of tradition. Even false anecdotes often enshrine a profounder truth than the dull records of actuality. It is for this reason that such writers as Aubrey and Anthony à Wood are of the greatest value and interest. They have preserved precisely those details which the magisterial biographer contemns. It is to Aubrey especially that we owe a vast debt of gratitude. All the world knows that Milton wrote *Paradise Lost.* None would have remembered, had it not been for Aubrey, that he had a singular method of pronouncing the letter 'r.' Suckling's lyrics are familiar to many. Aubrey has taken care that the man himself should be as intimately familiar as his lyrics. 'He was the greatest gallant of his time,' says Aubrey, 'the greatest gamester, both for bowling and cards, so that no shopkeeper would trust him for sixpence, as to-day, for instance, he might, by winning, be worth £200, and the next day he might not

be worth half so much, or might be sometimes *minus nihilo.* He was of middle stature and slight strength, brisk round eyes, reddish-faced and red-nosed (ill-liver), his head not very big, his hair a kind of sand colour. His beard turned up naturally, so that he had a brisk and graceful look.' Shall we not recognise Suckling instantly, if it be our good fortune to meet him in the Shades ?

The absorbing duty of the biographer, then, is the duty of selection. He should regard nothing as fit for his purpose which does not throw light upon the character and performance of his hero. He has nothing to do with the general tendencies of the time. The stern muse of history should not inspire him. The vision of his mind should be fixed unalterably upon a single figure. So much of background and environment is permitted as will make clear the position of the hero in his world and among his friends. But from this background the hero should always emerge with perfect distinction. He must never be lost in the trappings of his time and place. If we regard his career as a series of dramatic scenes, then we should insist that he is present always and in the centre of the stage.

Looked at in another aspect, the problem of

biography is the problem of portrait painting. Concentration, character, emergence are necessary in either case. What is the life of man but a conversation piece, in which the hero holds the foremost place and is always distinguishable? When Velasquez painted his famous group of the 'Maids of Honour' he showed us the king and queen only reflected in a mirror. Had they taken their place in the foreground of the picture, they would have drawn the attention away from the maids of honour, and thus destroyed the real interest of the group. It is by forgetting the wise lesson taught by Velasquez that the careless biographer constantly mars his work. He makes all his figures of equal size and importance, and loses his hero in the crowd.

For this reason there never has been, and probably never will be, a 'political biography.' The nearest approach to an impossible ideal is Benjamin Disraeli's *George Bentinck.* Yet even in that unmatched experiment the man is now and again sacrificed to the politics. As for the vast records of statesmen which fill our shelves, they may be armouries of arguments, they may be pigeon-holes of documents, they may in time to come serve the austere historians with a page. They are in

no sense biographies, for they submerge the statesman in the flood of his own enforced verbosity, and leave no vestige of humanity above the waves.

Biography, being an art, need not wear the trammels of convention. It may be long or short, since a work of art may not be measured by an inch-rule. Plutarch is justified of his brevity, as Boswell is justified of his amplitude. Nor need we look to biography for any of the meaner virtues. Impartiality, were it possible to it, would be its curse. The biographer must needs regard his theme with the enthusiasm of approval or contempt. Above all, he must not suppress his own temperament, for it is only through the biographer's temperament that we can catch sight of his subject. No form of art is more diverse and undulant than this. There are many paths to the goal so rarely attained. And most of those who essay the desperate task fail, because they know not how to omit, because they unpack their heavy wallet in the public gaze.

The best biography ever written is Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, and it is the best because Boswell was a conscious and patient artist. He was no divine accident, as Macaulay supposed, no fool grinning through a horse collar.

There is not a touch in his work that is not purposed. He claimed for his biography before it was published that it was the artistic masterpiece of its kind, and his claim was justified. He spares no touch that will heighten the portrait. He permits no touch that will distract the eye from the doctor's ponderous frame. And the result is that Samuel Johnson still stands before us, the most familiar of men, still speaks to us with a brave eloquence. For that is the great achievement of biography; it summons the dead back to life again, and sets upon the canvas of reality the vanished heroes of the past.

XIII

LAUGHTER AND SMILES

'La Gioconda,' the stolen masterpiece of Leonardo da Vinci, has haunted three centuries by her smile, a smile in which there lurks all the subtle wonder of the ages. Her lips still frame an enigma which the wit of man shall never solve. 'She is older than the rocks among which she sits,' says Pater; 'like the vampire, she has been dead many times, and learned the secrets of the grave; and has been a diver in deep seas, and keeps their fallen day about her.' And it is her smile, and her smile only, which inspires the admiration and fancy of the poet. There at the corner of her mouth, half hidden, half revealed, are the mysteries of life and death, the strange questionings of forgotten faiths.

Leonardo's picture is not the first work of art which has evoked our curiosity with a smile. Many centuries before Monna Lisa looked out from her canvas Lucian in a beautiful

phrase had celebrated 'the grave, beguiling smile,' *μειδίαμα σεμνόν καὶ λεληθός*, of Sosandra, the masterpiece of Calamis. Sosandra, alas, lives only in the critic's exquisite words, but we know that it was her smile which kept her fame and memory green long after the supremacy of Greece had passed away. Even among her contemporaries 'La Gioconda' has a rival. The wax bust at Lille still eludes us with a smile, still asks a question which none can answer, still bids us wonder what of pity, pleasure, or contempt flits in her sightless eyes and in her immovable lips.

Why should a smile possess this power to haunt and bewilder us? The most vivid representation of laughing man or laughing woman will always fail to touch us. We may respond to the hilarity of the artist or his model. But the response is frankly made, without reticence or mystery. The truth is that laughter and smiles are not even distantly related. The ancient theory that laughter is but a smile raised to a higher power has little to commend it. A smile, if a subtlety of thought informs it, will never grow into a laugh. It will remain misunderstood and unexplained. Even he across whose lips it passes may be but half conscious of its meaning.

In other words, laughter is the candid expression of a primitive emotion. There is nothing vague or hidden in it. It does not haunt us when its last echo has died upon the breeze. A sudden incongruity, an absurd juxtaposition of great and small, strikes us, and we burst out laughing. It is said that Sir Thomas Urquhart died of laughing because he heard that Charles II. was restored to the throne. The surprise was too monstrous to be calmly considered. Sir Thomas had sacrificed his wealth in the king's cause. His famous manuscripts, to him priceless, had been lost in the kennels of Worcester the day after the fight. And Charles II. was in London again! What should he do but laugh, and laugh so heartily that he snapped the thread of life? Such is laughter. To smile need betray no joyousness. It may suggest no more than an unrevealed secret of the heart.

If we must seek a relation between the two, we may admit that laughter is to smiles that which farce is to comedy. And as comedy, if it be loyal to itself, can never grow into farce, so the true smile is separated from laughter by a whole world of emotion. The comic spirit, for instance, demands no loud expression of approval. He who could laugh at Congreve's

Way of the World should be condemned for the rest of his life to be an unwilling witness of *Our Boys*. It is the intelligence which smiles, the emotions which laugh, and it is for this reason that laughter and tears lie very close together.

We are not laughers all. The ancient Greeks, I imagine, were more apt for smiles. The famous image of Æschylus, 'the many twinkling laughter of the ocean,' pictures the sea, not lashed into a fury of cachinnation by the winds, but broken by the silver ripples of a summer's day, and this gives us a clue to the meaning which the poet put upon laughter. To the Spaniards, again, of the great age, laughter was a breach of etiquette. Philip IV., it is said, thought that no more than a gentle smile was consonant with his dignity, and doubtless a smile was sufficient to suggest his bridled pleasure and the gravity of his humour.

Children and young races will laugh at anything. Irreverence tickles their sides, or the misfortunes of others. The laughter of America is inspired for the most part by a contempt of noble aims and ancient institutions. Mark Twain, who gauged the temper of his countrymen perfectly, knew that the artifice of sending a Yankee bagman to the

court of King Arthur would be greeted with shrieks of merriment. Such fun as that causes acute misery to those who still respect the ambitions of chivalry. It delights them only from whose experience the object of ridicule is far remote. For a kindred reason children miss the point of satire and comedy. I once sat next to a quick-witted boy at a performance of Molière's *L'Avare.* He saw nothing in it but a screaming farce, whose absurdity compelled him to rock in his seat like a boat in a choppy sea. And it is clear that his view of humour differed not widely from Mark Twain's.

It is characteristic of Englishmen that they are richer than any other race in that kind of humour which prompts to laughter. From Chaucer down to Dickens we may boast an unrivalled array of laughter-makers. The humour is often crude enough. It does not suggest the wayward smile, the twilit hovering between dawn and day that haunts the face of Monna Lisa. It is boisterous oftentimes. It holds both its sides and is unashamed. There are certain tales of Chaucer, in whom the spirit of English laughter first breathed, which but for their exquisite verse might be brushed aside as the

wildest of farce. Henry Fielding, still the master of us all, could evoke either smiles or laughter. If the irony of Jonathan Wild prompts the smile of wonder, Englishmen, let us hope, will laugh at the misadventures of Tom Jones and his friends until the end of time. And when we are wearied with the high spirits of Tom Jones, let us turn to Mr. Weller and acknowledge that no better excuse for hilarity was ever invented by the wit of man. Here is no reason for smiles, no unresolved doubts, no unanswered questions. Nothing but the incongruities of speech and thought which take from us the last shred of restraint and dissolve us in uncontrollable laughter.

The Frenchman holds a place half way between England and Spain. The gravity of Philip IV. on the one hand escapes him. On the other, he knows not the extravagance of our English farce. And yet, by a paradox, it is a Frenchman who has turned hilarity to the best account. The joyous spirit of Rabelais, laughing in his easy-chair, is free of the whole world. It has crossed the seas, it has conquered continents. And wherever it has gone it has carried with it the lessons of wisdom and good sense. For the laugh of Rabelais was

something more than an expression of humour. It silenced once and for always the pedantries of the Middle Ages. It made way in the world for a better understanding of life and letters. It is neither enigmatic nor mystic. Rabelais took a path to perfection of which his contemporary Leonardo knew nothing. The one was no better nor worse than the other. They were different, that is all; and in the kingdom of Art, where there are many mansions, there was room for them both. And there is room for Shakespeare too, who, greater than Rabelais, used humour with a sparing hand. Gargantua, Pantagruel, Panurge hold captive from end to end the romance of Rabelais. In the works of Shakespeare there is but one Fat Knight.

XIV

FREE SPEECH

Of all the cants which prevail to-day there is none so mischievous as the cant of free speech. Let every man say what he pleases, cry the lovers of ‘ progress,’ and if in the process they incite others to starve their neighbours and destroy society that does not matter. Even when our country lies in ruin before us, we may look upon the result with the satisfaction of Pecksniff, and murmur as the rebels put their heel upon our neck: ‘Thank God, we have vindicated the sacred liberty of pen and tongue.’

A fanatical journalist, evidently not endowed with the wisdom which should make him a teacher of others, was once moved to print an ‘ open letter ’ inciting British soldiers to mutiny. Instantly certain friends of ‘ freedom ’ protested against the punishment meted out to the journalist and his printers, on the double ground that it has advertised the views

of *The Syndicalist* and has interfered with the right of free speech. On the question of policy it may be doubted whether these friends of freedom speak with sincerity. It is certain that Pitt found the imprisonment of offenders a speedy check to disloyalty, and, reckless as are our present preachers of revolt, they will still shrink from a sentence of hard labour. As to the right of free speech, in what does it differ from the right of free action ? If death be still the punishment of mutiny, it were monstrous that he who from the security of an office urged mutiny upon others should go scot-free.

The occasion was such that not even Mill, that fanatical advocate of liberty, could have approved the freedom which the journalist allowed himself. It is true that we were not engaged in a foreign war ; it is true also that we were face to face with something very like revolution at home. If *The Syndicalist* had its way, it would lay violent hands upon all the industries of the country, and it sees in the army the chief obstacle to its policy of theft. At this moment, then, it would be the end of folly and wickedness to permit every demagogue to write and to say what seems good to him. 'Opinions lose their immunity,' says

Mill, 'when the circumstances in which they are expressed are such as to constitute their expression a positive instigation to some mischievous act.' In this case the instigation to a mischievous act was undisputed, and, purist as he was in the matter of liberty, Mill would surely have approved the prosecution of *The Syndicalist* and its printers, unless, indeed, he proved disloyal to his own argument.

That the passion for free speech should be thus encouraged is a puzzle of history. It would be far less dangerous to the community to encourage a freedom of action, an open breakage of the law. If A walks out and murders B in cold blood, his liberty of action does little injury save to B and his immediate friends. Were the murder to go unpunished, as presently it will if our 'intellectuals' have their way, it might persuade other weak-minded and vicious persons to take the law into their own hands. But the harm which it does is restricted and circumscribed. The harm achieved by free speech cannot be measured. Idle words falling upon ignorant ears are more powerful to injure society than fire or sword. Without them, in truth, there would be no fire and sword. The French Revolution, the most savage orgy of blood and

butchery that the world has seen, was a thing of words. A set of copy-book headings and the fatuous teaching of Rousseau involved the whole country in a madness of murder, bled it almost to death, and then made necessary a military dictatorship and five-and-twenty years of foreign aggression. That France is only now recovering from the shock sufficiently proves the baleful influence of free speech. Perhaps she has paid too dearly for the liberty, which was the liberty of the guillotine; for the fraternity, which was the fraternity of Cain and Abel; for the equality, which never existed, not even among potatoes.

Another danger of free speech is that he who indulges it assumes no responsibility. The miscreant who arms himself against his neighbour cannot evade the instant consequence of his act. The man who stands up on a platform, glib and self-satisfied, is persuaded by the applause of his dupes to believe himself the last repository of wisdom. He speaks without thought of meaning or consequence. He is carried away by the baleful sympathy of his audience to say what he deems to be pleasing to it. The cheers and laughter which reach his flattered ear drive him further on the road of destruction. His cheaply made gibes are

accepted by the ignorant and uncritical as truth itself; his words, spoken to catch a vote or to evoke a round of applause, become swords in the grasp of the weak and unbalanced; and when he sees the carnage about him he is stricken with horror, never with remorse.

For it is characteristic of him always to disregard the consequences of his speech. He is one of those sanguine souls who believe they can jump half way down Niagara. When the logical result of his eloquence is brought home to him he indignantly repudiates it. 'I am a law-abiding citizen,' says he, 'who will never go beyond the spoken word.' When Henry II. asked if nobody would rid him of that turbulent priest, he did not contemplate the brutal murder of Becket. Nevertheless, Becket's blood was on his head, and until demagogues guard their tongues they too must be held responsible for many an unpremeditated effect. You remember a celebrated speech made at Mile End in 1910. The orator was speaking of the hereditary peers. 'We would say to the Australians,' said he, '"Have you anything like this?" And they would say, "Well, stop a minute; we had a few years ago bushrangers, but we must inform you that they only stole cattle." Oh, we say,

cattle won't do; it must be land, and that on a large scale. "Well," says the Australian, "it really does not matter; we hanged the last of them a short time ago, before they had an opportunity of founding a family."' Doubtless this passage seemed a pearl of wit when it was spoken. Does the orator regard it with equal satisfaction to-day?

That is a speech whose freedom the orator himself must control. The law cannot interfere with it. There is another freedom, the freedom of *The Syndicalist*, which happily the law can and does check. That this check is not always rigidly enforced is evident from the outrages which from time to time take place in France. The amiable gentlemen who steal motor-cars and murder bank clerks are convinced anarchists. They have arrived at their lofty height of depredation by theory and argument. If others more guilty than themselves had not claimed a fatal liberty of speech and thought, they might have lived their inglorious lives in quiet obscurity. In other words, they are the last product of free speech, and as we contemplate their ferocity we confess that society may confer upon us some greater boons than the licence of unbridled tongues.

XV

ON GIFTS AND GIVING

It is an ancient custom, well observed at certain seasons, to mark friendship by an exchange of gifts. This custom is as amiable as it is ancient. There is no greater pleasure than to receive an unexpected something—a trinket, an old book, 'a duplicate out of a friend's library,' an odd present of game. 'We love,' says Lamb, 'to have our friend in the country sitting thus at our table by proxy.' And the pleasure that such gifts afford is in no sense a part of covetousness. We do not congratulate ourselves because we are the richer by something for which we are not asked to pay. The value of the offering is a mere accident to its acceptability. The most hard-hearted of men delights to think that his memory is still cherished, that all the thought that goes to the making of a gift was dedicated solely to him.

The art and mystery of giving may not be

acquired in a moment. It is not enough for a giver to be cheerful. He must be wise also. He takes upon himself a task of the utmost delicacy. He presumes to choose for another, and his choice may be made only in humbleness of spirit. An understanding mind is more surely necessary than a full pocket. 'To give is an ambitious quality,' said Montaigne, 'and of prerogative,' for which very reason the giver must put himself modestly in the place of the recipient. His generosity must be exercised not to vaunt himself, not to prove his own ingenuity, but merely to impart pleasure to his friend. Costliness and rarity do not of themselves increase the value of a gift. It is of far greater importance that it should be appropriate, and come pat to the moment. Nor is it becoming that it should attest the skill of the giver. That which is home-made is best kept at home. A man must be very sure of himself and of his friend, before he will bestow upon him his last book hot from the press.

And as it is the chief purpose of a gift to confer delight, it should not be too sternly useful. We must find for ourselves those objects of domestic and personal economy which we cannot do without. That which

comes to us as a gift should be something which without its arrival we should lack. It should bring with it a sense of gaiety and joyousness. It should add to the decorative pleasure of life. If it be small, it should not be grave, and it will be all the more welcome, if it overtake us with surprise.

But in munificence there must be no touch of patronage or superiority. The giver must be single-minded above all. No true friends are they who are conscious that they are conferring a favour. From them the privilege of giving should be withheld. It is such niggards as these who justified Montaigne in 'shunning to submit himself to any manner of obligation.' He would more willingly receive such offices as were to be sold. 'A thing easy to be believed,' said he, 'for these I give nothing but money, but for those I give myself.' Yet, stern individualist though he was, Montaigne, too, recognised the privileges of friendship. With his friend La Boëtie he would gladly have shared whatever belonged to either of them. For friendship can make no mistake either in giving or receiving. And why should we take gifts from any save our friends ? Where it is presumption to give it is the maddest folly to

accept. Who would win the shame of ingratitude for a nothing?

And the recipient must match the giver's discretion with his own meed of sympathy. Though disappointment is rare, if friendship make the choice, it must be supported with cheerfulness when it comes. Even though you cannot put a gift horse in your stable, you need not look it too severely in its mouth. If it be given in good faith and fall below a reasonable expectation, you must make the best of it, remembering that the giver did no worse than misinterpret your desires. But there are certain freedoms which you, being a grateful recipient, must still allow yourself. You need not hang an unwelcome picture, the gift of the artist, in the place of honour upon your walls. You need not strip your shelves, as did Lamb's friend 'of his favourite old authors to give place to a collection of presentation copies.' That, if it be not the weakness of vanity, is carrying complaisance too far, that is paying a higher price for sentiment than it will bear. On the other hand, he who gets rid of gifts by sale or barter commits the unforgivable sin. He deserves to receive nothing but 'improving' literature for the rest of his life.

'I fear the Greeks,' said Laocoon when he saw the wooden horse, 'though they come with gifts in their hands,' and no fear of unfavourable omens or of wounded pride should permit the acceptance of the gifts of enemies, which are no gifts. There are many thousands who once looked askance at the Christmas-box which Mr. Lloyd George promised to the people at Whitefield's Tabernacle. For it is a peculiar quality of offerings that they carry with them something of the donor's character and temperament. You cannot separate man and gift. The death of Hercules is, so to say, an allegory of inimical generosity. The fatal robe which Deïaneira sent the hero was poisoned not merely by the deadly drug devised by the Centaur, but also by the jealousy of the hapless woman, who was conscious that she had lost his love. And if good will is essential to the gift which passes from friend to friend, so too it must inform that public benevolence which goes by the name of philanthropy. He who gives not to his friends, but to the people, must be very confident in his wisdom. It is not the talent of all rich men to interfere with the lives of others. The careless distribution of gold, as it confers small benefit, deserves

little gratitude. We must be certain of its provenance before we may believe that the bequest of a hoarded million may bring happiness to the community. We can repose little faith in those who 'steal a goose and stick down a feather, rob a thousand to relieve ten.' We know them well, these men, lavish of conscience money, and if we are wise we shall look with suspicion upon them and their benefactions.

The amiability which considers only the pleasure of a friend is made of other stuff than this. As I have said, the art and mystery of giving are not easily understood, and the gamble of uncertainty may frustrate the wisest intentions. The ingenuity which chooses the gift the recipient himself might choose, and which none other has thought of giving, is one of the rare triumphs of life —a triumph we may enjoy with a better heart because friendship takes away the sense of obligation, because among equals giving and receiving are but two sides of one process. For the moment, at any rate, until another season come upon us, we may forget the scruple of Montaigne, and keep ourselves as far from a niggard unwillingness to bestow as from a pickthank reluctance to accept.

XVI

THE BIBLE AS LITERATURE

If it be a sacred duty to commemorate the great deeds of the past, then does the Authorised Version deserve all the honour that we can pay it. He would be rash indeed who attempted to measure the debt which we owe the scholars and men of letters who, under the auspices of James I., undertook the revision of the Bible. They went about the work in no narrow spirit of pedantry. They recognised on the very threshold the lofty import of their task. 'Whatever is in the Scriptures,' they wrote, quoting St. Augustine, 'is high and divine; there is very truth, and a doctrine most fit for the refreshing and renewing of men's minds, and truly so tempered that every one may draw from thence that which is sufficient for him, if he come to draw with a devout and pious mind.'

For the very reason that they shared St. Augustine's devotion, the scholars of James's

reign sat themselves sternly down to the making of their version. They spared neither time nor pains. They were gifted, as few translators are gifted, with a knowledge of both languages. Not merely were they masters of Hebrew and Greek; they were, what is far rarer, masters of their own tongue. Nor did their patience ever fail them. As they themselves proudly said, they did not 'run over the work with that posting haste that the Septuagint did.' Though they were not the first to translate the Scriptures, though they leaned gratefully upon their forerunners, yet would they sacrifice nothing to speed. In their own coloured phrase, they estimated curiously the burden of their toil. 'The work hath not been huddled up in seventy-two days,' said they, like the version of the Septuagint, 'but hath cost the workmen, as light as it seemeth, the pains of twice seven times seventy-two days: matters of such weight and consequence are to be speeded with maturity: for in a business of moment a man feareth not the blame of convenient slackness.'

Their 'convenient slackness' was most worthily rewarded, since it has given us a version unique in the world's experience. And if for a moment, overlooking all that the Bible

has meant for many generations of men, all the hopes which it has inspired and the fears which it has allayed, we regard it as a piece of literature, we shall best estimate the skill and tact of the translators. As a work of art—and it is a supreme work of art—our English Bible has a strange history. The version which is to-day read in our churches was not the production of one man or of one set of men. It is the only masterpiece of literature which has grown with the growth of a nation. We are accustomed to regard a poem, a picture, or a statue as the expression of an individual genius. We look with a well-merited suspicion upon the thing men call the spirit of an age. But as the Bible in its origin transcends the common experience of mankind, so the noble version which we in England have to-day was fashioned as no other piece of literature was ever fashioned. For its beginning we must look back into the dim, dark age of Britain. To give the Bible to the unlearned, who without a translation into the vulgar tongue were 'but like children at Jacob's well (which was deep) without a bucket or something to draw with,' was the ambition of our oldest scholars. Time has not spared the experiment of the Venerable Bede, who

turned some chapters of the Gospel of St. John into the vernacular. But from the time that William the Norman landed at Pevensey the task of translating the Scriptures was never laid aside, and we may take a certain pride in the fact that the first experiments in turning the Psalms into French were made on English soil.

Thereafter the activity of our scholars did not slumber. To Wiclif there succeeded Tyndale, to Tyndale, Coverdale. At each stage in the growth of the Bible you may note certain modifications of style or scholarship. But what is most remarkable is the close resemblance of phrase and spirit which persists in all the versions. Whether a natural feeling of respect discountenanced change or not, the Bible, as it grew up in England, defies all the canons of literature. There are unnumbered ways of turning a simple text of Hebrew or Greek into English. Yet when we compare the ancient versions, it is not their difference but their similarity which surprises us.

Thus it was that, when the scholars authorised by James I. undertook the task of revision, there was no lack of material at their hand. In the strict sense they were not translators at all, as they loyally confessed. 'Truly, good

Christian reader,' said they in their noble preface, ' we never thought from the beginning that we should need to make a new translation, nor yet to make of a bad one a good one: . . . but to make a good one better, or out of many good ones one principal good one, not justly to be excepted against; that hath been our endeavour, that our mark.' How well their endeavour succeeded, how valiantly they hit their mark, the world knows. But their own confession explains what otherwise might still seem a mystery. The Bible of 1611 belongs in style to an earlier age. It is all untouched by the splendour of Elizabethan prose. It shows no trace of the extravagance in which the Jacobean Englishmen delighted. It is marked by the noble simplicity of ancient times. Such language as this might well be the vehicle of high romance. We can hear in its plain and gentle eloquence the subdued voice of fairyland. If any one doubts the perfect discretion and humility of the revisers, who touched the work of their predecessors with a light and careful hand, let him compare any chapter that he will of the Bible itself with the translators' own prose, in their address to the reader, packed with allusion, pompous in cadence, vivid with imagery.

Here you may see the Jacobean style in full flight, and from its flamboyancy you may measure the supreme merit of the one work of literature, which has a continuous, unintermitted growth of a thousand years.

So have we come, through the skill and modesty of James I.'s scholars, into a great inheritance. The Authorised Version is in our blood and bone. We read it and hear it read our life through, and owe it perhaps the heaviest debt, when we are least conscious of it. What Homer was to the Greek boy the Bible is to the youthful Briton. Relying upon the lessons of honour and duty, of statecraft and warfare, which it teaches, he grows to manhood. If he be sensitive to the beauty of words, to the splendour of romance, he may satisfy with a single book his loftiest aspirations. Here in the Old Testament is unfolded the poignant drama of the Jews. 'He asked water, and she gave him milk; she brought him forth butter in a lordly dish.' Was ever storm more peacefully ushered in? Who can read of the death of Jezebel without a thrill? 'And when he was come in, he did eat and drink, and said, Go, see now this accursed woman, and bury her: for she is a king's daughter.' The very plainness of these words enhances

their grandeur. 'She is a king's daughter.' There in a sentence is all the tragedy of a murdered queen.

The lyrical splendour of the Psalms, the worldly wisdom of Ecclesiastes, the eloquent inspiration of Isaiah, the simple beauty of the Gospels—these are part of our English heritage. What should we know of them had not an unbroken line of translators unsealed the Bible to our eyes? They who gave us the version of 1611 knew well the value of their gift. 'Translation it is,' said they, 'that openeth the window to let in the light; that breaketh the shell, that we may eat the kernel; that pulleth aside the curtain, that we may look into the most holy place; that removeth the cover of the well that we may come by the water.' A bold claim to our gratitude which their serene craftsmanship and ceaseless harmony amply justified.

XVII

A DREAM COME TRUE

The announcement that at last the British fleet rides safely at anchor in Cromarty Firth recalls to our mind a forgotten hero and a half-forgotten town. Cromarty, indeed, lies in what seemed before the advent of the fleet a pleasant backwater. The railroad has passed it by in an amiable disdain. If you would reach it you must either descend by ferry-boat from the north or drive through the fertile fields of the Black Isle. And when you have accomplished the journey you discover a village rather than a town, tranquil in its obscurity, and haunted by memories of which the bustle of modern life will never rob it. It is no resort of knickerbockered tourists. Its quiet, grey streets are seldom disturbed by noisy 'excursionists.' Now, for the first time, a grandeur, understood by the people, is thrust upon it. Our warships are comfortably anchored in its spacious harbour;

the dream dreamed by Sir Thomas Urquhart, the greatest of its sons, has at last come true.

Sir Thomas Urquhart was born in Cromarty in 1605, and spent many a year of strife in that remote fastness. Though he had travelled from end to end of Europe, fighting his way from court to court with the point of his sword and the yet sharper point of his wit, though he had mastered all the learning of his time, he remained unto the end a loyal son of the little town which gave him birth. Even in his darkest hour he saw visions of Cromarty's aggrandisement. Assailed on all sides by jealous enemies, pressed by ruthless and unjust creditors, ruined by his heart-whole fidelity to the king's losing cause, it was for Cromarty's sake rather than his own that he lamented his untoward fate. Had prosperity smiled upon him, what would he not have achieved for his native town! He would have made it, said he, 'in a very short space, the richest of any within three-score miles thereof.' The task was easy—of that he had no doubt. Only the importunity of usurers and the jealousy of Inverness, 'whose magistrates did most foully evidence their own baseness by going about to rob my town of its liberties and privileges,' thwarted his ambition,

and prevented Cromarty from taking its place among the busy ports of the world.

It was in the harbour of Cromarty that he centred his hopes, thus anticipating by more than two centuries the resolution of the British Admiralty. 'This harbour,' he wrote, 'in all the Latin maps of Scotland, is called *Portus Salutis*; by reason that ten thousand ships together may within it ride in the greatest tempest that is as in a calm.' As he gazed from his castle, which stood upon the South Suter, on the empty anchorage of the firth, doubtless his prophetic mind pictured the sails and cordage of unnumbered ships. And none knew better than he that ships were then the best encouragers not merely of commerce, but of the arts and sciences as well. The commercial prosperity might, he thought, have been easily assured. 'By virtue of the harbour's conveniency,' said he, 'some exceeding rich men, of five or six several nations, masters of ships and merchant adventurers, promised to bring their best vessels and stocks for trading along with them, and dwell in that my little town, with me who should have been a sharer with them in their hazard, and, by submitting factors to accompany them in their negotiation, admitted likewise for a

partner in the profit and advantages.' The romance of trade was never better imagined, and had Sir Thomas Urquhart carried out his grandiose design the history of Scotland, and of England too, would have been completely changed.

But Sir Thomas, as sublimely fantastic a hero as Don Quixote himself, would never have been contented with 'profit and advantage.' It was after the unattainable that his eager mind hankered. His two favourite projects were to square the circle and to invent a universal language. So it was that he considered the future of Cromarty, with the courage of an idealist. When once the natural advantages of the harbour were recognised, all else should be added to his native town. The merchants whom he would have invited to participate in Cromarty's aggrandisement were no common merchants. They were men of learning and culture. There was, for instance, 'that ever renowned gentleman for wit and excellency, in many good ports, Sir Philbert Vernati; who being of Italian parents, by birth a Dutchman, and by education expert in all the good languages of the Christian world, besides the Arabick and Sclavonian languages, wherein he sur-

passed, had a great ascendant in counsel over all the adventurous merchants of what nation soever.' With Sir Philbert's aid, Sir Thomas would have abolished all idleness from Cromarty, and would have maintained there several thousands of persons of both sexes 'from the infant to the decrepit age.'

His schemes were as various as they were useful. If only he had been allowed, he would have attracted to Cromarty the most skilful artificers in Europe, who would have revealed to his fellow-countrymen the manifold secrets of their art and craft. He would have induced masters of husbandry to dwell in his town, who would not merely have given instruction in the tillage of the land, but would have explained the use of ploughs and harrows, winders and pulleys, 'and all other manner of engines fit for easing the toil and furthering the work; whereby one weak man with skill may effectuate more than forty strong ones without it.' Thus again in his device of labour-saving did Sir Thomas Urquhart look forward through the centuries, and prove that exact knowledge was no clog upon the imaginings of his brain.

Nor in assuring his neighbours wealth and prosperity would Sir Thomas have neglected

the things of the mind. If patronage could have succeeded, then would Cromarty have become a flourishing centre of art and literature. Thither would the poets and learned men of Europe have flocked, in obedience to the invitation of Sir Thomas Urquhart, and there the most eminent of living painters would have immortalised upon canvas the scholars and merchant venturers of what would have become the greatest city of the north. And with learning he would have encouraged also bodily sports, such as shooting, hawking, angling, and 'what else might any way conduce to the accomplishment of either body or mind, enriching of men in their fortunes, or promoting them to deserved honours.'

Alas, he was not permitted to carry out his magnificent projects. The impetuosity of the usurer overthrew his resolutions, and blasted his aims in the bud. The genius of the civilised world was not concentrated in Cromarty. Sir Philbert Vernati found elsewhere a more profitable theatre for his talents. The arts, still flourishing in Italy and Spain, declined to take refuge in Sir Thomas Urquhart's septentrional fastness. But the merits of Cromarty's harbour, 'in goodness

equal to the best in the world,' are at last appreciated. Though Sir Thomas's panegyric did not persuade any larger vessel than a pleasure yacht to come within its ample spaces, though Cromarty has still remained, in spite of its lord's fantastic hopes, a secluded and beautiful fishing village, our ships of war now sail between its promontories, 'vulgarly called Suters,' with ease and safety. And he who laughed till he died at the restoration of Charles II. must surely smile in the shades at the grim irony of fate, which has decreed, two hundred and fifty years after his gayest of deaths, that one at least of his glorious dreams should come true.

XVIII

THE KNOCKING AT THE DOOR

In Shakespeare's *Macbeth* the murder of Duncan is followed by 'Knocking Within.' The stage direction is precise and repeated: 'Knocking Within.' The effect of the knocking upon Macbeth and his lady throws a sudden light upon the character of each. It fills Macbeth, already haunted by spectral shapes, with wonder and alarm. 'Whence comes that knocking?' he asks, as one whose terror-stricken senses cannot guide him aright. 'How is't with me when every noise appals me?' Lady Macbeth, on the other hand, still mistress of herself, knows its meaning and its provenance. 'I hear the knocking,' says she, 'at the south entry: retire we to our chamber.' Her ears deceive her not. So the knocking inspires in her no fear, but the necessity of caution. 'Get on your night gown'—such is her practical counsel—'lest occasion call us, and show us to be watchers.'

Macbeth, rapt in the inward contemplation of his crime, thinks only of his victim. 'Wake Duncan with thy knocking! I would thou couldst!'

Meanwhile, the persistent 'knocking within' has moved the audience to another temper. It has relieved the tense strain of the murder. Macbeth has 'done the deed' and told his pitiful tale. The ghostly voice still speaks in his ear. 'Sleep no more! Macbeth does murder sleep.' The savage heroine has 'gilt the faces of the grooms' with blood. Then comes the knocking, the knocking of a man's hand upon the door; and we emerge suddenly from the land of darkness and black deeds. To dwell longer upon that altitude of terror were impossible. It is to the sound of the knocking that we descend once more upon the common earth. The truth and necessity of this reaction were perceived long ago by De Quincey, and explained in a passage of luminous criticism which cannot be too often recalled. 'Hence is it,' he wrote, 'that when the deed is done, when the work of darkness is recalled, then the world of darkness passes away like a pageantry in the clouds: the knocking at the gate is heard; and it makes known audibly that the reaction has com-

menced; the human has made its reflux upon the fiendish; the pulses of life are beginning to beat again; and the re-establishment of the goings-on of the world in which we live first make us profoundly sensible of the awful parenthesis that had suspended them.'

Thus one purpose of Shakespeare is revealed to us in a flash. The knocking within restores us to a consciousness of plain and innocent things. The poet knew that to pile horror upon horror is to exhaust the nerves of the people, to abolish the alternate play of light and shade, and thus to impair the very sense of tragedy itself. As the clairvoyant mind of De Quincey discovered, the effect of the knocking is to reflect 'back upon the murderer a peculiar awfulness and a depth of solemnity.' This effect the Greek tragic writers produced by their choric odes. It was one office of their chorus to suspend for a while the emotions of the audience, and enable it to measure the height and depth of tragic awe. And Shakespeare, having no chorus to aid him, relied, as a rule, upon the puns and banterings of comedians to give his hearers the necessary pause and contrast. It is by a clear design that in *Measure for Measure* the absurdity

of Elbow follows close upon Claudio's condemnation to death. The gravediggers of *Hamlet* are with a wise purpose interposed between the news of Ophelia's drowning and the maimed 'rites' of her funeral ceremony. And those critics who reproach Shakespeare with tickling the groundlings' ears in his comic passages prove only that they have missed his point. He is making no concession to the spirit of the people. He is merely removing from the mind of his audience a strain too violent to be borne.

And it is in the symbolism of inanimate things, in the suggestion of homely effects, that Shakespeare most conspicuously shows this genius of reaction. The knocking on the door in *Macbeth*, sufficient for relief of itself, is tempered by the humour of the porter, who 'had thought to have let in some of all professions, that go the primrose way to the everlasting bonfire.' Nor is it difficult to match elsewhere this speechless artifice of *Macbeth*. In *Lear* also a door plays a tragic part. The stricken king has made the most bitterly poignant of all his speeches:

> 'I have full cause of weeping; but this heart
> Shall break into a hundred thousand flaws
> Or ere I'll weep. O fool, I shall go mad!'

A line of commonplace is suddenly interposed: 'Let us withdraw: 'twill be a storm.' And then, at the act's end, Cornwall suggests in a dozen plain words the callous insensitiveness of the traitors to the king's peace:

> 'Shut up your doors, my lord; 'tis a wild night.'

Here is the last word of cruelty: for them the warmth of fire and hearth; for the king and Mad Tom nothing but the hospitality of 'cataracts and hurricanoes.' As in *Macbeth* it is the knocking at the door, here it is the door shut against the king, which moves us more profoundly than would a dozen lines of eloquence.

Some modern poets, too, have understood the emotional value of inanimate things. M. Maeterlinck, in his play *The Intruder*, a work of ghostly shapes and supernatural whisperings, harrows his audience with the simple symbolism of a fairy tale. At each sentence that is spoken on the stage Death the Intruder seems to approach nearer to us. There is some one in the garden; the nightingales suddenly cease their singing. Surely somebody passes by the pond; the swans are afraid; the barking of the dogs is silenced. A cold breath comes into the dark and haunted

room, and the father tells his daughter to close the door. Death is already pushing his way in, and with the suggestion of an opening door the sentiment of terror is complete. The daughter cannot shut the door. The others go to her aid, and still the door resists. And not even the sound of the sharpened scythe, which is presently heard, intensifies the feeling of fear. Then M. Maeterlinck, recognising, as Shakespeare recognised, that human nerves have their breaking point, suddenly softens our excitement with a practical solution. It is all the fault of the damp, says the uncle. The carpenter will set it right to-morrow, replies the father. And the audience knows well that they talk nonsense, that the doorway was in truth thrust open by the grim Intruder, Death.

It is thus that the artist excites our terror. Even the crude and clumsy journeyman does not appeal in vain to the movement of lifeless objects. I once saw a melodrama at the Grand Guignol which differed from others of its kind only in a single episode. It was composed of the common ingredients—jealousy and crime. An angry mistress and a murdered wife were asked for the hundredth time to rend your hearts. And then came a moment

of real horror. A door opened, without cause or purpose, and there was not a soul in the little theatre that was not shocked. The workman of the Grand Guignol is removed by centuries of thought and experience from Shakespeare. The subtlety of the sudden 'knocking' in *Macbeth* would doubtless be unintelligible to him. Yet he, too, realised the value of a grim symbolism. For generations of poets and philosophers a door has typified the beginning and end of things. The one door of life is an accepted commonplace. And do we not still wonder at what Sir Thomas Browne called 'the thousand doors that lead to death'?

XIX

THE DYER'S HAND

Dr. Joseph Bell, well known to many generations of Edinburgh students, has another claim upon our memory than that which belongs to a brilliant surgeon. He was the master of an inductive method all his own. Reason and observation were so closely knit up in his brain that they seemed one single process. When you began to disentangle a single statement of his making, you saw at once that it was not the mere hazard of guess-work; it was the final stage in the swift vision and intuitive comparison of many facts. The patient, who was described by Dr. Bell at his entry as a non-commissioned officer in a West Indian regiment, perchance believed himself the victim of a miracle. The recognition was not a miracle. For those that had eyes to see there was no snapped link in the chain of argument.

The gift of Joseph Bell was doubtless innate.

He had improved it marvellously by a lifetime of study. He once wrote an article upon the influence of occupations upon the hand of man, which suggests that it was not merely the tell-tale face which he called into the witness-box of discovery. Nor did any of the minor incidents of experience elude him. With zealous care he noted the peculiarities of soil and neighbourhood. One day a stranger came into his consulting-room. Without lifting his eyes, the doctor said, half interrogatively: 'You found it very muddy crossing the Meadows this morning.' 'How did you know I crossed the Meadows?' asked the stranger. The reason was obvious. The mud which clung to the stranger's boots was found nowhere else in Edinburgh.

Dr. Bell's was but a general faculty raised to the highest power. Sedulous practice and sound knowledge might bring it within the reach of most of us. The dyer's hand is subdued to what it works in, as Shakespeare told us long ago. We cannot, if we would, escape the influence of our deeds and thoughts. We bear upon us plainly writ the history of our lives. Vice and virtue mark indelibly the face of man. 'What does drink provoke?' asks Macduff in the play. 'Marry, sir, nose-

painting,' answers the porter, in anticipation of Western America, and though the testimony of our excess is not always as clear as this one, it is a hopeless task to escape the notice of our fellows or the consequences of our acts.

If we watch those whom we encounter in street or train we have little difficulty in divining their character and pursuits. Not even the wiliest of us forbears to hang out a sign. He whose quest is gold stands revealed by the glance of satisfied appetite in his eye, by the firm acquisitiveness of his jaw. He whose mind is set upon another ambition, who fails to grasp the lock of Opportunity's forehead, invites us to his confidence with a happy-go-lucky nonchalance. The politician needs no rosette in his buttonhole to trumpet his opinions. The bluff and greedy arrogance of the Socialist are far more eloquent of his false ideals than his red tie. The calm balance of the settled Tory requires no commentary. The polished forehead, the sanguine eye, the lofty air of superiority which denote the unthinking Radical are recognisable at the first glance. It is only in the highest walks, where genius levels all men, that even the criminal can hide his guilty

intention. We know that Charles Peace, the most cold-blooded of all burglars, the artist, who rifled whole suburbs for art's sake, had won the general reputation of benevolence. We know that Palmer, the hero of Rugeley, was reputed a good fellow by all his acquaintances. These men and their like dwelt upon the mountain-top. The ordinary criminal does not deceive the casual passer-by. You may recognise the burglar even though no centre-bit is sticking out of his pocket. The *apache* of Paris wears a uniform, no doubt for the convenience of the police. The uniform is unnecessary. His hungry look, his weak, unrestrained mouth, are sufficient to convict him. And even if he had the prudence to mask his expression the shape of his head would still betray him. No man, by taking thought, can change by the hundredth part of a degree his facial angle.

And there is always the dyer's thumb. There is no profession which does not mark its members for its own. The stockbroker and the barrister, clean-shaven both, bear not the faintest resemblance the one to the other. We need never confuse the soldier, smart, precise, alert, with the sailor, whose eye looks out towards the far horizon. The man of

books, with speculation in his glance, is sharply divided from the brisk and busy man of action. Even fashion may change our type. In an exhibition of portraits the centuries are easily distinguishable. When a lofty forehead was the first necessity of female beauty no woman was beetle-browed. It is something more than artifice which produces a popular tint of hair. When hobble skirts appeared to be the last word of elegance, few there were who knew not how to adapt themselves to the new tyranny.

The ease, wherewith we may divine the characters and purposes of men, is the more remarkable because to-day our constant aim is outward uniformity. We do not blazon our professions in our clothes. The time has gone by when Bohemia took pride in long hair and velvet coats. The man of letters no longer drops his pipe upon the drawing-room floor, as he did in the French play. We dress alike, we speak alike, we act alike. The barriers of class are being rapidly broken down. To appear a gentleman seems a higher ambition than to appear a poet, or a stockjobber, or a politician. And as, by a stroke of good fortune, we are no longer driven into pens, to consort only with our kind, we do our best,

like loyal citizens of the world, to speak with the same accent, to see with the same eyes as the rest.

In vain we make the attempt. A swift induction disconcerts us in an instant. We may look all alike to the Chinaman, who finds it difficult to separate one European from another. Our faces deceive the philosopher as little as the mud on our boots would deceive the practical geologist. Though all our coats be black, though all our hats be shiny, we cannot hide the brand of good or evil that is upon us. Success or failure is written large and plain upon our brows. If we have been triumphant, as the mob understands triumph, we reveal to all the field of our victory. Happiness or misery lurks in the corners of our mouths. Wisdom or folly glances from our eyes. Not even the talent of the histrion can suppress our unwilling sincerity. We may clip our hair as we will. We may despise the antic garments of the past. Our precautions are taken in vain. The dyer's hand is still confessed though no hint of colour stain it.

XX

THE MAN WITH A MESSAGE

There is no one more sadly familiar to our modern experience than the Man with a Message. Not content with devoting to his own use all the platform of Europe, he has laid an impious finger upon our theatres, and if he could he would express his fads with equal effrontery on painted canvas and in printed book. Having little skill of hand, and a perfect contempt for craftsmanship, he yet proclaims himself the greatest artist in the world, for no better reason than that he can find sermons in stones and ill in everything.

That he should flourish most easily in England, the home of Puritanism, is but natural. He has been familiar in our midst for three centuries. He haunts those debauches of dulness called Social Science Congresses. His insistent voice is heard continually at the street corners. He may pretend to follow this profession or that, but there is

one thing he never ceases to do, and that is to preach. He thinks that every day is mis-spent on which he has not been permitted to 'ventilate' a grievance—his favourite phrase. He bores his fellows without stint or shame. His sanguine mind persuades him that he has only to formulate a complaint, and the world is 'better' in an instant. In brief, he is a dreary disturber of the peace, who should be sternly confined within the four zinc walls of his favourite meeting-place.

Evil communications corrupt good manners, and our bad example is having its effect in Paris. There have been published in English three plays by M. Brieux, which might have been written in Hampstead. They are redolent of 'dusty air and jaded afternoon daylight.' They should be read only by 'men with bald heads and women in spectacles.' That they were ever put upon the stage is a strange affront to the good sense of France. Utterly without distinction or persuasiveness, they are an eloquent proof of the debauching effect of a 'message' upon an otherwise quick intelligence. M. Brieux, profoundly inspired, has discovered, what has not escaped all those who never stood in a pulpit, that marriages are not always happy. No sooner did this

deep truth take hold of him than he expressed it in four acts of unexampled crudity. Nothing save an intervening censor, one would think, could sit undisturbed through the grim recital of his obvious 'message.' But there are not lacking those who applaud his courage, and declare, as they read his unexpressive words, that he has 'done them good.'

The other two plays were taken from the same dim cupboard. This one describes, in the language of statisticians, the hardships of maternity, legitimate or illegitimate. That one, still more greatly daring, is a pompous debate concerning the disastrous effect of disease upon matrimony. Here, indeed, in the compass of a single volume are three distinct 'messages,' gloomy, incoherent, and superfluous. If it is M. Brieux's desire to inaugurate a set of pious discussions, he will certainly fail of his object. For it takes two to make an argument, and he will not find, even among those miscreants who go to the theatre to amuse themselves, and who believe that there is something better in the world than 'messages,' a single dissentient. Nobody believes that the main purpose of marriage is to visit the sins of the father upon the

children, or that men and women, whose acquaintance with one another is superficial, always live upon terms of amity without a hint of harmless compromise. When, therefore, M. Brieux preaches in his plays, as he has no right to do, he preaches to the converted. His lessons are neither new nor subtle. And he and his friends resemble nothing so much as a set of gossips who find pleasure in making each other's flesh creep by a proud recital of human frailties.

That is the worst of 'messages'—their utter obviousness. 'He who takes what isn't his'n, When he 's cotched he goes to pris'n.' In these words we may plumb the depth and scale the height of all authentic plays with a purpose. Nor have we ever heard that any 'message' has produced an appreciable result. Human nature will not be changed merely because M. Brieux or another concocts a pompous debate, which he calls a 'comedy in three acts,' and feels a grievance when the censor advertises its irrelevance by forbidding it to be publicly performed. Acted or unacted, our theatrical evangelists still make a parade of their good intentions. There is nothing which they detest so bitterly as 'art for art's sake.' Yet, for all their ardent

professions, they are compelled to fall back upon a foolish war-cry of their own: 'Message for the sake of the message.'

As all the 'messages' of these simple folk are obvious, so they are transitory also. The message of yesterday is stale like an old loaf. Each coterie of earnest persons desires to hear its own gospel. It despises any sermon of the stage that is not delivered to those who have already accepted it. And as these plays by M. Brieux have not the smallest meaning in London, where marriages are contrived upon another plan, so with the passage of a very few years they will lose their meaning in Paris also. Why, then, are they written? To prove, I suppose, what things are unfit for the theatre, a place of amicable resort, and to chasten the erring spirit which does not suffer bores gladly.

And every year these messengers of woe become more numerous. How, indeed, shall you escape their ministrations? They buttonhole you in the street; they bombard you with tracts; they discomfort you with disguised comedies. Rather than not do you good they would break your head and fling your bones into the river. They do not tell us whence they derive their authority thus

to perplex and annoy us ; yet they demand that we shall prefer their dusty debates to the gaieties of all the ages, that we shall discard the delicate pictures of manners given us by the masters for their sad glimpses into the obvious. And the world, meanwhile, is wiser than these professors of the newest comedy, who would scarcely be heard of, if they did not beat the drums at the doors of their booths.

That, we have been told, is the essence of the 'message.' The drum must be beaten. Only those who have no message know the fastidium of silence. Here, again, we are confronted by a mystery. Why, we ask with eagerness, is the drum a necessary part of 'doing good'? The day of the stealthy benefit, it seems, is over, and not only must your right hand know what your left hand is doing, but all the hands in the town, right and left, must know also. Not long ago, at a country fair, I thought I had pierced the mystery. A boy, a perfect master in the art of advertisement, triumphantly addressed the people from the security of a cart. He promised to abolish all the diseases of human flesh, with the simple drug which he held in his hand, and to return his patients' pennies untouched. His eloquence was irresistible ;

the mob eagerly poured its coins into his hat, and cheerfully went home, the poorer in pocket, with their manifold diseases uncured. Here, I said, is the new dramatist himself, the real man with a 'message.' He spoke again, and I saw my mistake. The gift of eloquence was too sure, the trick of persuasiveness too cunning. He was no better, after all, than a heartless exponent of art for art's sake, who would rather have cajoled his audience than cure all the wooden legs in the parish.

XXI

THE USE AND ABUSE OF LIBRARIES

When Lord Rosebery deplored at Glasgow the multitude of dead books preserved in libraries, he added a spice of irony to an obvious truth. The greatest folly of the present age has been the increase of libraries. No man has ever harboured a more monstrously fantastic ambition than Mr. Carnegie. Being the master of great wealth, he has forced masses of printed matter upon innocent communities. We all look with suspicion upon gifts that are no gifts, and not only is Mr. Carnegie's facile generosity misplaced, but it levies a useless contribution upon others. The ingenuous multi-millionaire is magnificent on his own terms. Add to your already overburdened rates, says he, or renounce my benefit. And so eager are the most of men and communities to get something for nothing, that very few towns have evaded the pitfall.

There is little to be said in favour of Mr.

Carnegie's libraries. They are established upon the foolish theory that books are good of themselves, and for all men. And the truth is that either they lead to the half-knowledge, which is the worst vice of our age, or they are a mere anodyne for restless, idle souls. We are asked to expend our gratitude and to increase our rates that listless dwellers in provincial towns may kill the time, which hangs heavy on their hands, by the reading of poor experiments in illiterate fiction. But to include all libraries in the condemnation, which is properly pronounced against those, falsely called 'free,' is to misunderstand their real aim and purpose.

It is complained that libraries are cemeteries of dead books, and in a sense the complaint is justified. But even cemeteries have their uses. Not merely do they keep sweet and blossoming in the tomb the deeds of our distinguished ancestors. Their simple headstones help us to reconstruct, if we will, the plain lives of plain folk long since dead and gone. Libraries are prisons also. In their locked bookcases are shut up, without the option of a fine, many precious volumes, whose daring style and reckless speech put them, unjustly, among the criminals of literature.

But most of all, the great libraries are the homes of living, breathing thought. Within their walls are gathered together the wisdom of all time. Those who have eyes may discover therein the priceless record of gallantry and devotion. The music of the ages sings in their shelves. Even dead theology proves its uses there, and the historian may not disdain the dusty treatises of ancient law. The library of the British Museum, in one respect the vastest cemetery of books in the world, is in another sense the very temple of light and life. The mere fact, that it contains all, forces upon the reader the duty of choice. There are spread out for his use the prose and poetry of every age and land, and few men of letters would not gladly confess the profound debt, which they owe to its universality.

For it is the universality of such libraries as that of the British Museum which is their highest virtue. I would take nothing from it. I would not cease to add. There need not be many such. One or two to guard the greatest of all are sufficient for our wants. By all means let the libraries which bear the name of Mr. Carnegie upon their forehead be destroyed, if that will satisfy the Sadic rage

of the enemies of books. But let no violence be done to the vast public libraries, which afford decent burial to the dead and a stately home to living books. When Mr. Gosse proposes that 'the time has come for regulating an immense destruction of books,' it is difficult to understand his argument. If he means that he would limit the number of libraries I am in agreement with him. He does not appear to mean that. It is not the reduction of libraries, but of books, which he advocates. He regrets that the burning of the library at Alexandria is a fable. He asks a precedent of that kind. Yet in the time of the Caliph Omar there was no Carnegie, and the library at Alexandria contained treasures, now dispersed, for which poets and scholars would sell their souls. After all, it is very easy not to read books, and why their mere existence, remote from the advocate of fire, should fret his mind it is not easy to perceive.

Destruction implies a destroyer, and who is there confident enough in his own power of discrimination to undertake the office? Nobody would trust Lord Rosebery or Mr. Gosse with so delicate a task. The truth is we do not want another to make choice for us. It is one of the puzzles of literature that

criticism is always hazardous, and that what appears to one the lightest trash is for another poetry pure and undefiled. And as the destroyer would be, no doubt, a public functionary, he would perforce follow the public lead. He would look no further than the suffrages of the people. In his eyes the established reputation would seem unassailable. His best guide would be a constant advertisement. If we look back over the past we can readily imagine some of the mistakes he would have made. He would have sacrificed Shakespeare, and kept the works of Ben Jonson for our delectation. In a later age he might have spared us Coleridge. He would certainly have smiled with satisfaction as the works of Lamb and Hazlitt crackled on the bonfire. Byron would have been given an honoured place, while Keats and Shelley would have been remembered only as hapless men, who died young. Even Walter Scott himself, had he been asked to decide, would have treasured Smollett, and let Fielding burn. Who shall decide? Not the disagreeing doctors certainly. Shall we, then, leave the fate of literature to the caprice of such as Betty Barnes, the cook, who has been thought the benefactor of our race by some, because she

lit her fires with unique specimens of the Elizabethan drama ?

Mr. Gosse believes in 'selected and concentrated libraries.' He has discovered the most exquisite private collection in the drawing-room of a small house. Had the rage of fire prevailed, the greatest treasures in that collection might have shared the fate which has overtaken the true Greek anthology, the works of Sappho, and many masterpieces of Æschylus and Sophocles. For fire is as poor a judge of books as the critics, and feeds its appetite on the best and rarest. Nor can you make an exclusive library without a wide field of choice. It is plain, therefore, that we must put up with all the books, which the greed of publishers and the folly of authors produce. They do us no harm. There is room in the world for us and for them. No clamorous advertisement can force them upon the notice of the wise man. Miss Marie Corelli and Mr. Hall Caine spread their net in vain. The day may come when they are thought the glory of our blood and State. Not even the most brilliant genius can foresee the fate of printed pages. When Defoe in *Moll Flanders* composed the greatest chapbook the world has ever known he was content,

no doubt, that it should fall into the hands of such as Borrow's old apple-woman on London Bridge. He could not prophesy that it would be translated into French by the hand of a master, and that a single copy would be knocked down at auction for the princely sum of five hundred pounds.

Let us, then, guard our books jealously against the tongue of fire. And if we cannot achieve the best thing of all, a library of our own, quick to respond to every whim and pulse of our taste, let us be content to remember that in Bloomsbury, as at Oxford and Cambridge, there are still 'vast cemeteries' of books, where none is refused decent burial, and where, if we have the wit and understanding, we may still call the oldest and rarest back to life.

XXII

UNIVERSITIES OLD AND NEW

It is part of the democratic conspiracy which holds sway in our midst to disparage the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge. The attacks are made upon these ancient institutions without thought or knowledge. When it is acknowledged that they encourage learning and not the mere cult of majorities, enough has been said in their condemnation. The doctrine of equality, once favoured by the People, is out of fashion. The proletariat alone is entitled to 'equal' justice and 'equal' privileges. Those who do not belong to the favoured class are fit only to be stamped under foot. It is not enough that Oxford and Cambridge should open their doors to what Lord Curzon describes as 'the poor.' They will not win the approval of the sacrosanct People, until they have gone a step further and closed their doors against 'the rich.'

The popular disparagement takes many

forms. A hasty glance convinces the superficial observer that at Oxford and Cambridge there are no 'serious students.' Not long since Bishop Welldon, who once described himself with exquisite humility as 'the one actual and visible link between Eton and Harrow,' usurped the voice of Democracy to condemn our older universities. 'The atmosphere of a modern university,' said he, 'is intellectual. At Oxford and Cambridge the atmosphere is much more social.' What he means by 'social' is not quite clear. It evidently connotes an intellectual inferiority, and as it is the harshest word of reproach in the mouths of politicians, for whom truth, honour, and righteousness are bound up in the blind worship of numbers, we may take it that 'social' is not a compliment.

What measure of truth, then, is there in Bishop Welldon's statement? The modern universities of England discharge, no doubt, a very useful purpose. Established in manufacturing centres, they provide the technical education which is necessary if our industries are to preserve their supremacy. Their professors of science are above suspicion. They set about their work unhampered by the customs of the past. They take their duties

in a proper spirit of seriousness. Like all universities, they number among their students bookworms and idlers. What they lacked chiefly, one would have thought, was an 'intellectual atmosphere.' Their interest in the humanities is slender. Their sternly practical minds see in education not an end in itself, but a means to the solid end of scientific or commercial success. Thus they fulfil the law of their being. Thus they add vastly to our strength and prosperity. It is, and should be, no reproach to them that they do not enhance the intellectual life of their country. Of what avail is their atmosphere, if scholars do not breathe freely in it? Why vaunt their superiority to the old universities, which have done the intellectual work of England, in justice and statesmanship, in science and scholarship, for many centuries, when they must still seek their professors in Oxford and Cambridge?

The reproach that Oxford and Cambridge are 'social' may easily be dispelled, if indeed it be a reproach. Of the snobbishness which appears to hang about the word there is no trace in these ancient institutions. There, if anywhere, is a career open to the talents. There, if anywhere, a man is accepted for what

he is and what he knows. The history of Oxford and Cambridge is the history of scholarship, easily recognised and worthily rewarded. As it has always been, so it is to-day. The fact that Wolsey's father was a butcher at Ipswich did not hinder his preferment at Oxford. The great heads of houses at Cambridge—Milner, the famous President of Queens'; Whewell, the autocratic Master of Trinity—did not owe their pre-eminence to high connections or to social distinction. Nor, indeed, would this foolish charge need refutation were it not made constantly at labour congresses and other meetings of the 'half-baked.'

If by 'social' is meant the spirit of equal intercourse in games and studies, the interchange of thought and wit, the struggle of brain against brain, then it is to be hoped that Oxford and Cambridge will never cease to be 'social.' For undergraduates can teach one another wiser lessons than they will ever learn from their tutors, and so far from there being any hostility between what is 'social' and what is intellectual, they are one and the same thing. He is but an unworthy student who carries away from his university nothing more than is taught in the lecture-room and tested in the Senate House. There is a passage in

FitzGerald's *Euphranor* which explains more vividly than would a page of argument the 'social' value of Cambridge. 'And so we went on,' he writes, 'partly in jest, partly in earnest, drawing philosophers of all kinds into the same net in which we had entangled the Poet and the Critic—how the moralist who worked alone in his closet was apt to mismeasure humanity and be very angry when the cloth he cut out for him would not fit—how the best histories were written by those who themselves had been actors in them. . . . And so on a great deal more.' And the scene would not have been perfect if the disputants had not been overtaken by the boats, 'the crews pulling with all their might, compacted into perfect rhythm,' and the crowd on the shore waving their caps and cheering. Thus they walked homeward, where 'the dusky troops of gownsmen seem'd as it were evaporating in the twilight, while a nightingale began to be heard among the flowering chestnuts of Jesus.' Here is a memory, call it 'social,' 'intellectual,' or what you will, such as many a man will treasure more faithfully than all the statistics that ever were packed into a useful text-book.

The truth is that all the abuse of our old

universities comes from an inverted snobbishness, the result of class-hatred. That strange thing called the People, from which the large and wise minority is wantonly excluded, is a veritable cuckoo. Not content with clamouring for an entrance into Oxford and Cambridge, which has never been denied it, it is determined to throw out all whom it finds there. Though it never wearies of insulting the universities and their teaching, though it eloquently extols the modern institutions, which have grown up during the last quarter of a century, it still meditates an assault upon the despised seats of learning. Is it to make them 'intellectual,' I wonder? If that be the intention, the method proposed to suppress all the time-honoured studies is strange indeed. We know the vague suggestions, the two years' course of commercial geography and book-keeping, the school of carpentry, and the rest, which are to regenerate Oxford and send her hustling along to the forefront of the time; and we cannot believe that any wise man should approve them. You may not with safety put new wine into old bottles. There is no place on earth where the rudiments of commerce and carpentry cannot be better taught than in Oxford. If a boy is destined

to a career in business it is in an office that he will learn the most profitable lessons. A carpenter's bench may be found in every village, more apt to teach the young mechanic than the class-rooms of Oxford. And Oxford herself, if she be thus 'intellectualised,' what will become of her, 'steeped in sentiment as she lies, spreading her gardens to the moonlight, and whispering from her towers the last enchantments of the Middle Ages'? She will become the nourishing mother of brisk engineers and bright young telegraph clerks. And freed at last, with Cambridge, from her 'social' atmosphere, she will satisfy perchance the 'intellectual' cravings of Bishop Welldon and assuage the class-hatred of the Labour Party.

XXIII

THE SPIRIT OF PURITANISM

It is accounted by some a pleasant parlour game to discover diseases in our politic body. England, we are told, is overtaken by a pernicious love of sloth and ease. When she sends her sons across the seas she sends them, it is hinted, to idleness and luxury. The restless ambition which made us the masters of the world is dying in the sad hunt for doles and pensions. And now there is foretold, to our utter undoing, a 'great new uprising of the old spirit of Puritanism.' If the prophets speak truth, our case is hopeless indeed.

There is no country that ever stood less in need of Puritanism than England. Even in Froissart's time we took our pleasures sadly. Gaiety was not instinctive in us. The lesson which England should have been taught at every epoch was the lesson of happiness. This was the lesson which she was learning in the sixteenth century—her real renaissance—

and learning it with a good heart. To happiness, it seemed, all things would be added. Poetry and enterprise went hand in hand. For once in our history prosperity and intelligence were not at variance. Shakespeare and Drake were true compatriots; Cecil and Spenser lived and worked under the same sky. Merry England had at last deserved her name. There were life and vigour in country as in town. If the theatres drew the citizens of London to the Bankside, there was hardly a village in the land which did not boast in its fair a place of merchandise and joyous company. And then came the Puritans to chill the national heart, to throw contempt upon mirth and jollity.

The early Puritans were inspired to their crusade not by the fear of vice, but by the fear of life. They were a reaction against the spirit of adventure. They made war upon every manifestation of gaiety and enjoyment. To see them at work you have but to consult Stubbes's *Anatomy of Abuses.* That egregious Puritan, writing in 1583, left no custom nor habit of his time untouched by the finger of his scorn. He was not content to reprove such sins as covetousness and usury, in which reproof he would have won the sympathy of

all honest men. He found fault with all the decorative arts, which embellish life. His quick eye detected crime in a jerkin, infamy in a ruff. Sumptuous apparel in man or woman was hateful to his jealous mind. Above all, the diversity of hats appalled his modest soul. Some were sharp on the crown, he moaned, others flat and broad, and all were the inventions of the Evil One. 'And thus in vanity,' said he, 'they spend the Lord his treasure, consuming their golden years and silver days in wickedness and sin.' These are grave words to be wasted on so small an incident of man's life as head-gear. After all, it was then, as it is now, the fashion to go covered abroad, and even Stubbes himself wore a hat. But his was banded, and herein lay a great virtue. 'Of late,' he complained, 'there is a new fashion of wearing their hats sprung up among them—namely, to wear them without bands, but how unseemly a fashion that is let the wise judge.' Perhaps you must be a Puritan to understand the true holiness of a hat-band.

Thus Stubbes examined whatever men and women wore, and detected a heinous sin in the simplest garment. But it was for 'the devil's liquor, I mean starch,' that he reserved his

bitterest abuse, and we, hapless victims of chance, still commit an unpardonable crime every time we go out to dinner. And as all personal adornments were a sin, so also were 'dainty fare and gorgeous buildings.' Cooks and architects alike lay under the ban. Far worse were stage plays and interludes, 'where such wanton gestures, such laughing and fleering, such clipping and culling, and the like is used, as is wonderful to behold.' In the same spirit of self-satisfied intolerance did Stubbes condemn May games, music, dancing, markets, fairs, football, all literature save Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*, and the other evidences of a cheerful heart. He saw no profit in any pursuit that made not for immediate sanctification, and so well pleased was he with his own eloquence, that he knew not what evil he and his like brought upon the land.

If the Puritans had had their way, art and beauty would have vanished from the earth. The nobility of their intention cannot blind us to the truth that they loved nothing so well as a maimed and crippled life. They could not understand that joy and laughter are the only begetters of virtue and happiness. If the music of laughter be silenced in our midst, we fall into an abyss of vice, even though the

bands upon our hats be of the broadest. Had the doughty Stubbes imposed his gospel upon England, there would have been no Shakespeare, no Ben Jonson, no lyrical cavaliers, no noble houses, no painted record of the past. Nothing would have come down to us save a habit of invective, many distorted texts, and the impenetrable gloom of intellectual fog.

And this triumph of joylessness was not the only aim of the over-zealous Puritans. They would if they could have struck a blow at all the virtues. Painted in their black colours, restraint and self-sacrifice seemed vices fit only for the imbecile. Where sin was so easy, as it appeared to the Puritans, there was small incentive to well-doing. Who would preserve his standards of right and wrong, if he subscribed to a gospel which condemned with the same virulence usury and hot cockles? And the Puritans, despising moderation, passed a sentence of equal injustice upon all who did not conform to their narrow standard of thought, speech, and apparel. Is it any wonder then that, until Cromwell made it an instrument of politics, Puritanism was a word of reproach and nothing else?

The supreme vanity of the Puritans was to

impose their tenets upon all men. They believed themselves the conscience-keepers of humankind. They presumed to speak, to feel, and to think for others. And from this vanity sprang the hypocrisy, which was their heaviest sin. They were pretenders to virtue. They advertised in their prim looks, their cropped heads, their dun garments an exclusive claim to moral rectitude. No man was ever so good as the Puritans looked, and their very pretence compelled them to act the part of insincerity. Truly they have laid a heavy hand upon England, whose inarticulate gravity is due not merely to the influence of race, but to an unhappy example.

The 'Puritan' was no new thing when he cast a slur upon the energy and courage of Elizabeth's England. Before him there were those who made broad their phylacteries and for a pretence made long prayers. Nor did he die with the death of Stubbes. He lived to darken a decade of years in the seventeenth century, and, by casting 'virtue' into the shadow of a general disapproval, to prepare such a reaction of frivolity as the world has never seen. The tired gaiety of Grammont, the fantastic folly of Rochester and his friends, were the work of Puritanism, and though it

is easy to condone the extravagance of King Charles's court, we do not wish to see again the same excess on either side. As for the spirit of Stubbes and Praise God Barebones, that lives fitfully among us to-day. Let us hope that it will never be fully revived. It is better that every man should be the guardian of his own honour, and not confuse virtue with misery, or vice with gaiety of heart. The sky is overhead and the sun shines. There are still books and plays and pictures to delight our eyes and ears. And if the Stubbes of our generation come with grim looks and long faces to reprove us, let us take the advice of the Master and be happy. 'Fly from these men,' said Rabelais, who knew them well, 'and abhor and hate them as much as I do, and upon my faith you will feel yourselves the better for it. Never trust these men, who always peep out at one hole.'

XXIV

THE FUTURE OF THE NOVEL

Mr. H. G. Wells, an evangelist always, has made an extravagant claim for the craft which he follows. He thinks that the novel should be a moral and political maid-of-all-work. The stage does not satisfy him. Biography he finds inadequate. The novel only shall regenerate us. In his own words: 'It is to be the social mediator, the vehicle of understanding, the instrument of self-examination, the parade of morals, and the exchange of manners.' A pretty theory, the stoutest stumbling-block in whose way is the sad truth that novelists, like the rest of us, are men, not giants.

There is, in truth, no reason why a limit should be set upon the aims of fiction. So long as a novel is faithful to the artistic law of its being, so long as it is not a loud and conscious preacher, it may surely point what moral it will, it may illustrate whatever corner

of human activity it chooses to select. But before it becomes 'the social mediator' and 'the vehicle of understanding,' we must discover a new race of novelists. When one man does the work of ten, he must be endowed with the strength of ten. To satisfy Mr. Wells's exacting theory, the novelist must not merely be omniscient, he must be so far removed from the perplexing facts of life, as to see all things in a just and fair proportion. He must possess eyes which can observe at different focuses, which no detail escapes, and which are yet trained to take a wide and ample view. And he must do more, this miracle of intelligence and invention. He must pierce the husk of appearance until he reach the true meaning of all things. Philosophy and politics must yield him their secrets. The history of the world must lie before him like an open map. Then all the gifts of art should be his—a quick sense of style, a brave economy of words, a stern concentration of interest, a vivid understanding of the picturesque. He must be able to discover romance in common things, to enshroud the dull records of his time in an atmosphere of breathing life. When we have found a hero thus richly endowed, we may be able to fill the pedestal erected for

his reception by Mr. Wells. Meanwhile we must content ourselves with simpler practices and a plainer ambition.

Only one man since fiction was invented has essayed the task lightly sketched by Mr. Wells, and that man was Balzac. What he had not observed of men and women, what he did not know of the multiplex life about him, he easily divined. He called into being a hundred diverse societies. The Faubourg St. Germain was as clearly familiar to him as the underworld of rogues and sharps. Nothing in the vast procession of French life escaped the eye of his mind. The citizen soldiers, the new peerage, the collector of bric-à-brac, the man of pleasure, the actress, the venal journalist, the idealist who thought the world a light sacrifice if he might find the absolute, the pitiless, unpitied miser—he drew them all with perfect verity, and in a right relation one to the other. And, above all, the spirit of adventure animated him, the spirit which drives youth forward in its first impact upon experience, the spirit which turned Rastignac's dreams to solid, ill-earned gold, and drove De Rubempré upon the shoals of fortune and disaster. Balzac, in brief, was at once the inventor and the historian of

modern France. If the growing cosmopolitanism of Paris has somewhat dimmed his picture of the capital, the country towns, the villages, all the diverse activities of the provinces, remain still as he made them. And even if the whole of modern France passed away, the 'Comédie Humaine' would still survive as a monument of truth. He drew men and women, whose complete sincerity will give them life unto the end of time. Truly it might be said of him what Dumas said of Shakespeare, that after the good God he created the most.

The sudden apparition of a giant Balzac, then, might bring Mr. Wells's dream true. In his hands the novel might achieve the wonderful results, which our Radical statesmen promise from each of their new Bills. A new heaven and a new earth might swim into our ken, at the mere touch of the magician's wand. The mysteries of the universe might be pierced, and a ready solution be found for all the problems of politics and literature. In the meantime, while we await our Balzac, might we not content ourselves with a more modest ambition? There are many reforms of which our fiction stands in need before it begins to shake the earth. As novels have increased

in number they have lowered miserably their standard of thought and style. The distance which separates the mass of them from literature widens daily. They have no closer relation with the arts than hard-boiled eggs or pots of beer. They are devised to sell quickly, and their authors are content, if they enjoy the freedom of the circulating library for a month. They are wholly deprived of sincerity, because, as the truculent demagogue permits his audience to make his speeches, so the popular novelist permits his readers to write his books. The first duty of the novelist, then, a duty which should lie far nearer to his heart than the regeneration of mankind, is to insist that his craft should be followed as scrupulously in point of style as it was followed by Fielding and Sterne. They did not think it enough to preach a sermon or to devise a fable. They were not intent to make their fellows better. They did protect the English tongue by their care from the assaults of incompetence. They did 'illustrate' it with all the resources of their sensitive artistry.

And when our novelists have castigated their style, let them give their days and nights to the study of character. If they write of

nothing which they do not know they may leave alone 'the parade of morals' and 'the exchange of manners.' It is better to be master of a grass-plot than to profess the governance of an unknown province. Jane Austen, in the tranquillity of her country town, made deeper discoveries into the nature of men and women than all the romantics of her age. After all, universality is no part of the novelist's business. It is not his business, it is not the business of anybody, to exhaust the experience of the whole race.

Mr. Wells, having painted in brilliant colours the future of the novelist, 'the most potent of artists,' concludes by demanding for him an absolutely free hand 'in his choice of topic and incident and in his method of treatment.' Surely he need have made no such demand, he need have proclaimed no such intention. The intrigues of censors, the vain malice of Puritans, touch not the novel but its circulation. The novelist who is sincere to himself cannot be persuaded to an infidelity by that which concerns the mere accident of his craft. The legend of the man who was not allowed to write a work of genius is no longer credible. Flaubert was not besmirched because *Madame Bovary* was

dragged through the courts in disgrace. They were besmirched who insulted a great artist. They could do no more than insult him. They could not turn his purpose or mould his judgment. And truly he can claim no sympathy who puts his sincerity off like a garment because censors upbraid and critics bark. Though they destroy the episodic comfort which is called the 'sale' of his novels they cannot degrade the novelist's art, and since they have nothing to give that is worth having, so no demand should be made upon their forbearance.

In conclusion, the future of the novel depends not upon nicely constructed theories, not upon the absence of hampering restrictions. It depends solely and wholly upon the genius of the novelist. And if ever Balzac revisits the earth he will find the soil ready prepared for the grain he has to sow.

XXV

THE MANY-TWINKLING FEET

Of one sad season at least few happy memories will linger in our mind. There were wars and rumours of wars. Wanton strikes and careless legislation proved the ignorance and the malice of our Government. The lust of revolution travelled like a pestilence across the world. Yet amid the grim nightmares which we would willingly forget one image of joy remained ineffaceable. The Muse of the many-twinkling feet shone upon us in all her beauty. The season which gave us the Insurance Bill could not withhold the Russian Ballet from our delighted vision.

It is the general superstition of the stage that words alone can inspire emotion, that tragedy and comedy, wit and humour, reside only in speech. The Russian Ballet, legitimate descendant of the Greek Pantomime, has revealed to us the truth that the spoken word is no essential part of drama. The

dancer closes her lips eloquently. She has other voices at her command. The lucidity of her gesture, the mobility of her expression, interpret the swift thoughts of her mind. To the proper setting forth of her story all the arts contribute—that is true. Music and painting are the proper embellishment of the dance. But they are subordinate always. The true drama glints and flashes in movement of hand and foot, and with so fine a clarity do the artists express themselves that we seem to hear the words that are frozen upon their lips.

As I watched them the line, quoted by Lucian, came to my mind: 'Dumb though they be, and speechless, they are heard.' Never was there a doubt of their intention, never a darkness in their meaning. The 'Carnival' opened to your eyes a page from the life of Bohemia. The 'Sylphides,' far removed from the world of common things, is a danced and acted dream which each one will understand as he lists. In the 'Spectre of the Rose' the quick fancy of romantic youth is visible, and visibly interpreted. The dancers are never vague or at fault. As they know precisely what they have to express, so they express it with a perfect precision of grace and

beauty. Of them it may be said what Demetrius the Cynic said of Nero's dancer: 'This is not seeing, but seeing and hearing both. It is as if your hands were tongues.'

And as the airy dramas dance before you, you cannot but think how gross a medium is speech. We burden ourselves with words—at their best a clumsy and uncertain artifice. These poets write poems with their swiftly moving feet, and sing with the flashing of their hands. They are at once artists and their art. They need not go beyond themselves to find the means of their expression. It is not for them to hanker after the right word or search for a subtle tone on a palette. What colours are for the painter, or the music of sweet sounds for the poet, they are for themselves. Their hands and feet, the exquisite poise of their bodies, tell us the passions and emotions of their souls. Happy indeed are they who have discovered that all things may be said with a gesture, who arrive at perfection without battling first with clay which is not plastic, or with words which evade a meaning!

As our fathers spoke of Taglioni and Fanny Elssler, so we are proud in our knowledge of Pavlova and Kchessinska and Karsavina. We have accepted our opportunity with a wise

humbleness, and are learning that there is something more in dancing than a solemn posture. Those missioners of intellectuality, who marched slowly round the imperfect representation of a dissevered head, no longer find favour in our eyes. London has at last discovered the beauty which resides in the immemorial tradition of the ballet. She has renounced her old and foolish habit of despising, as mere gymnastics, the marvellous steps of the ballerina poised upon her toe-tips. In brief, the antics of Greek maidens, fresh from California, are now revealed as the poor experiments of amateurs; and that we have come to this better knowledge is due to the lessons taught us of beauty and delight by the Russian Ballet.

To see Mme. Pavlova dance is to catch a pure vision of disembodied art. She is not a poem; she is the soul of a poem. A child of fire and light, she flashes before us like a beautiful flower, and leaves behind her a memory yet more beautiful. Even as she touches the ground she disdains it, and when the air claims her, like a bird in flight, it is but for a moment of passage, before she alights once more upon the earth. Her feet are the expression of her joy and sorrow. It is as though she laid

before them her soul and mind in offering. Her hands are the eloquent interpreters of her will. Yet to speak of hands and feet in the same sentence with Pavlova is to rest too heavily upon the truth. She is ethereal always—the very spirit of the dance, a part of the music, with which she moves in perfect harmony. And who shall praise the gay exquisiteness of Karsavina, whose ampler, surer style affords a vivid contrast to the impalpable Pavlova, whose every movement is a miracle of grace and art, and who keeps in nearer obedience to the tradition of the grand style ? Truly, if Pavlova be the Shelley of the dance, then is Karsavina its Keats. And even yet the queenly Kchessinska is still unsung, and Nijinsky, to whose versatility nothing is impossible, and who with agile step can give us wit and humour, tragedy and comedy.

As you watched these enchanted ballets you felt the awe which all perfection inspires. You wondered, as Hazlitt wondered in the presence of the Indian jugglers, how it is that certain feats of skill, certain manifestations of art, pass beyond the reach and scope of criticism. In the greatest poem, the finest picture, there may yet be passages which irk the mind or the

eye. The most highly gifted orator is capable of distressing his audience with hesitation or obscurity. To write a book or even an article is a hazardous and tentative business. No man can know at the beginning whether he will ever bring it to a successful issue. Yet in the dance, as the Russian artists conceive it, there is no fumbling, no uncertainty. The mastery is open and complete. A false step, a sudden trip, would mean confusion, if not danger. And yet no thought of the possibility of failure could enter the brain of the spectator. At Covent Garden there was no break in the argument, no ugly phrase, no faulty grammar. Nothing but the perfect expression of exquisite artistry.

The book remains, imperishable to the mind of archæology. The picture, if once it gain the freedom of a gallery, carries its images to remote posterity. The dance lives but in a memory of enchantment. Even as we say farewell to Mme. Pavlova and her colleagues, they have passed from the sentient eye like butterflies on the wing; and the happiest hope we can cherish is that with returning summer they will return to flash once more in the sunlight of our content.

XXVI

THE WEATHER

It is a reproach commonly levelled at the head of Englishmen that they talk of the weather. The last storm engrosses them, or the hot summer. The year, in which the Thames was frozen and an ox was roasted whole upon its surface, is remembered as long as the year of a great victory. We greet our friends, it is said, with an anxious inquiry concerning the state of the heavens. Will it rain ? Is there a chance that the sun will penetrate the stubborn cuirass of the clouds ? Will it freeze in May ? Or shall we have a green Christmas ?

Though the reproach is fair enough, it should not dishonour us. We speak of the weather because we alone know what weather is. Other countries may boast of their climates, firm and settled as the codes in accord with which they administer justice. But weather they have not. We, on the other hand, live in a state of happy expectancy. The mysteries of the sky

and air are for us still unpierced. There are no rules to control the adventurous spirit of our atmosphere. December may frown through the smile of June, or June parch us at the winter solstice. To deny us the luxury of an interest in this gamble of our changing life were absurd, even were it not dictated by a kind of jealousy. And despite the contempt of foreigners, we shall take a garrulous pride in a sky suddenly overcast or in a frost unforeseen, unto the end of time.

This interest in the weather is as old as the British Isles. It was shared by the earliest travellers, and remains a fruitful source of jocosity to untravelled foreigners. An ancient Greek, Pytheas by name, who, journeying from Marseilles in the fourth century B.C. was the only discoverer of Britain, was already amazed at the enveloping fog which, in the quick fancy of France, still darkens London at noonday. The chroniclers of the Elizabethan age are as anxious concerning the changes in the weather as concerning the shifts and chances of policy. They have left us a faithful record of great heats and violent tempests. We know, for instance, that in 1444, on Candlemas Day, a standard of tree set up in Cornhill, and nailed full of holm and ivy, for

the disport of Christmas to the people, was torn up and cast down by the malignant spirit of the storm. We are as familiar with the great frost of 1205, 'whereof it came to pass that to the following summer a quarter of wheat was sold for a mark of silver,' as with the exactions made by King John in that ill-omened year. And once at least the weather was an excuse for a masterpiece of literature, the famous *Storm* of Defoe, which for vigour and vividness the most skilful 'reporter' of modern times has not equalled.

The storm which inspired Defoe to his prose epic broke over the south of England on Friday, 26th November 1703. Never had so fierce a tempest raged upon our shores. The British fleet was totally destroyed, save the great ships, which, under the command of Sir Cloudesley Shovel, outrode the fury of the waves. The countryside was stripped of trees, the church steeples were carried away like blown leaves, hayricks and straw-stacks were scattered by the wind to the four quarters of the heavens. A few hours were sufficient to lay London in ruin. The toppling of chimney-stacks, the falling of houses, added a new terror to those who, not daring to remain beneath their roofs, took refuge in the street.

The lead on the tops of churches was rolled up like rolls of parchment, and in some places blown clear off from the buildings which once it covered. 'The houses,' said Defoe, 'looked like skeletons, and an universal air of horror seemed to sit on the countenances of the people.' And then the weather, true to our English traditions, suddenly mended. For near a month after the storm, writes Defoe, 'it proved fair and temperate, which gave people a great deal of leisure in providing themselves shelter, and fortifying their houses against the accidents of weather by deal boards, old tiles, pieces of sailcloth, tarpaulin, and the like.'

It was Defoe's custom to describe what he had not seen, as an eye-witness. In reality he knew no more of the storm than he knew of Robinson Crusoe's Island. He was shut up in Newgate on the fatal Friday, and in Newgate he remained to write the description, every word of which carries the conviction of truth to the heart and brain. The deception which he practised sets in a clearer light our English interest in the signs and portents of the sky. The storm for him was as fair an excuse for fiction as the tales of travellers or the exploits of highwaymen. Even if a

harsh law did not permit him to see the shattered chimney-stacks and the devastated city of London, at least they served to adorn his tale, and to point a moral against the sin of atheism.

It is therefore in perfect harmony with the tradition of our life and literature that we should talk, and continue to talk, of the weather. And so far from feeling our habit a cause of reproach we should congratulate ourselves that fate has so amiably loosened our tongues. We are not by temperament easy of approach, one to another. Our voices do not naturally trip before our thoughts. And Providence has given us an infinite variety of heat and cold, of sunshine and rain, to cover the inferiority of our invention. How many friendships would never have been knitted but for the kindly interposition of an unexpected shower! The mere observation of the fact that it is warmer than yesterday quickens the springs of memory. Instantly we are prepared with contrast and comparison. The summer of 1911, when men fresh from the tropics fainted in the streets of London, will be treasured as a topic of conversation when the South African war is fading into oblivion. To the young it was a

fresh experience. In the old it revived many reminiscences of early youth. And it will still arouse regret for the past, good hope for the future, through many a chilly June.

Nor is it only in the exchange of talk that the weather stimulates our fancy. The waywardness of our air has ever been the source of imagery to the poets. Only an Englishman could paint his love more 'temperate' than a summer's day. Not elsewhere do 'rough winds shake the darling buds of May.' Indeed, we can best illustrate the difference which separates Racine from Shakespeare, if we remember the contrast between the reasonable climate of France and the caprice of an English sky. The one is certain, well-ordered, and of an even balance. The other is swift in thought, full of colour and surprise, reckless in the breaking of the law. Thus it is not strange that romance should have found its natural home in England. The sudden tempest, the April day that laughs between the showers, the iron winter that turns in a moment to a kindly spring, are full of the wonder that is the essence of romance. Let us then feel no shame at our good fortune, and when we go abroad to-morrow, let us say with a light heart: 'It is a fine day.'

XXVII

THE EDUCATION OF A PEER

Once upon a time Lord Tankerville, if he were reported aright, took the two great democracies of the earth into his confidence, and there is nothing that the hearty democrat loves so well as to be taken into the confidence of a peer. From Land's End to John o' Groat's, from New York to the Pacific coast, it flashed forth how Lord Tankerville would educate his son, and the Old World and the New were vastly better and happier for the news.

In other words, the whole human race was informed that Lord Ossulston would forthwith be removed from Eton, and be sent to learn the first lessons of conduct and culture in Boston, the high-souled. A brief comparison will prove how good was the fortune that overtook this young gentleman. He escaped in a moment from the shackles of an outworn mediævalism. Had he stayed at

Eton in a condition of slavery he would have been compelled to study the Greek tongue, that infamous arrangement of cabalistic signs, invented by Satan, and nicely calculated to ensure an evil life. Nothing really useful would have been permitted to approach his vexed brain. Even in the strenuous pursuit of Greek iambics and Latin prose he would be taught the fatal lesson which no Etonian fails to learn, that work is a thing to be ashamed of. Here there can be no mistake. True it is that Etonians are found high in the class lists, prosperous on the Stock Exchange, and leaders of men in peace and war. They have attained their eminence by trickery, not by work. It is a fact, well known to every member of the Labour Party, that an Etonian is as languid as one of Ouida's guardsmen until the day of his death.

Worse still, the unhappy boys who linger still by

> 'the wat'ry glade,
> Where grateful Science still adores
> Her Henry's holy shade,'

are brought up in the lap of an effete luxury. Eton has for centuries been a by-word of effeminacy. Bedrooms, furnished with the elegance which you would expect only in a

Parisian hotel, a private bathroom for each of the little monsters, obsequious valets posted at every door, when the young gentlemen please to dress for dinner—these are the insidious means by which the strength and courage of England are undermined. And this is not all. A youngster with a title, as all the world knows, is 'kowtowed to by a sycophantic crowd of would-be aristocrats,' a humiliation not easily to be borne. To such a vile pitch of snobbishness, in fact, is the worship of high station carried at Eton, that every noble youth is forced to prove his superiority by fagging for one, who may be a mere commoner, and the headmaster joins in the conspiracy to worship his title by bending over it, switch in hand!

How, in such an atmosphere of sycophancy as this, can a free-born democrat grow to a wholesome maturity? Bred to the idle study of dead and heathen tongues, flattered by boys and master alike, supremely honoured by the birch-rod, the young Etonians are speedily rendered unfit for any but a loafer's life. In vain they 'chase the rolling circle's speed,' in vain they 'urge the flying ball.' The 'undercurrents of commercial unrest' pass them by unperturbed. They know not what tragedy

awaits them round the corner. 'All unconscious of their doom the little victims play.' And should we not all rejoice, that one small brand, at any rate, has been plucked from the burning?

In the free air of America Lord Ossulston found wiser and better lessons to learn. No sooner did he pass the far-famed statue of Liberty than his youthful chest marvellously expanded. He discovered in the land, where the Ten Million Dollar Baby is guarded by detectives, that all men and boys may go and come as they please. At last he stood upon a shore where the sanctity of titles is unrecognised. Every one knows that America is the only country on the earth, save Timbuctoo, where peers and princes escape notice. There they may walk to and fro, and transact their business without attracting the attention of prying eyes. As we have been told a hundred times, America is distinguished from all others as the country where there are no reporters. Day after day steamers unload their human load at Hoboken, and not a single newspaper-man has the impertinence to find out who are the bearers of great names, that come to visit the biggest and freest country upon earth. Nobody is ever asked what he thinks of

America; nobody is ever troubled by impertinent questions; and Lord Ossulston has surely congratulated himself on the fact that he is to be brought up in a land entirely innocent of curiosity.

In Boston there were none to 'kowtow' to him, for there were none to know who he was. He went to school as plain Charles Bennet, and though this poignant fact has been printed in every newspaper of the United States, it is already piously forgotten. And as plain Charles Bennet he became familiar with that profound truth that all men are equal. He speedily found out that there is no difference between Mr. Pierpont Morgan and the Bowery boy. Where there are no titles, money confers no privilege. Moreover, in the land of the free, no man has yet been known to pursue the dollar with an excess of zeal. The dollar exists, it is true, but merely as the kindly minister of the simple life. Every citizen in the United States is amply content, if he can purchase enough food and drink to nourish his body, subscribe liberally to a Sunday school, and find leisure to attend his Browning Club once a week. What a contrast indeed did the plain-living and high-thinking Boston present to the purse-proud, vulgar, sycophantic Eton!

And besides the inestimable lessons of satisfied humbleness and honourable poverty taught in America, a young Englishman may there acquire the rudiments of practical politics which will stand him in good stead in after life. He may learn for the first time the pious doctrine that the spoils are to the victors, and if Fate smile upon him he may even be permitted to discover in Tammany Hall the inmost arcana of humane government. That philanthropic institution will bring home to him as nothing else could the great truth that public life can afford to neglect the private interests of no man, from a president to a policeman. Thus he will penetrate the manifold mysteries of graft, and if in due time he embrace a political career in the Old Country, he will know how to deal with the vast bureaucracy, conferred upon us as a boon by the Radical party.

Therefore, it is to be hoped that Lord Tankerville's example will be widely followed, and that there will rise up among us a younger generation, destined to rule our empire, and trained, not in the narrow mediævalism of an obsequious Eton, but in the brave, modest, incorruptible atmosphere of free and equal America.

XXVIII

WHO WAS SOPHOCLES

ONCE upon a time an eminent novelist put the question to a friend: Who was Sophocles? And when the friend did not hesitate to set him side by side with Shakespeare, the eminent one replied: 'I mistrust your judgment. You always were so partial to these foreigners.' No longer may Sophocles be classed with 'these foreigners' by the ignorant. He is free of our heart and our stage. Not even the lavish 'production' of Herr Reinhardt can obscure his perfection from our eyes. Œdipus the King is supreme in the realm of art, as once he was the happy despot of Thebes. And if we still ask who was Sophocles, we ask it to satisfy a sympathetic curiosity. Shall we not, if we can, draw back the veil which shrouds from our sight the heroes of our admiration?

It is a commonplace of experience that the greatest men are reluctant to come out into

the light of day. We are only now wrestling that fall with time which shall bring back Shakespeare from the grave. And Sophocles still remains a figure of vague beauty. We freely confess that he was 'the mellow glory of the Attic stage.' That he 'saw life steadily and saw it whole' is proved by his masterpieces. We have every right to deduce from his poetry the perfect harmony and balance of his brain and temper. His profound interest in human character is evident in his works. But what he wrote is not a sure index of what he was. His stern impersonality still defies us, and if we would discover what manner of man he was, we must betake ourselves perforce to the biographers and the gossips.

Born in 495 B.C., Sophocles lived through the great century of Athenian glory, and watched it go broken to its tomb. His father's wealth gave him an education worthy his talents. To him, thrice fortunate, the gods denied none of their gifts. To genius, beauty, and happiness they added length of days. So great was his skill that he was chosen, a boy of sixteen, to dance before the trophy set up to celebrate the victory of Salamis. He passed through life with an air

of distinction ever about him. He excelled in those accomplishments—music and gymnastics—which his countrymen prized above all others, and he displayed his versatility on the stage, for, like Shakespeare, he was an actor, as well as among his own friends. When he put his *Thamyris* on the stage, he played the harp, to the delight of all those who heard him, and he showed in his *Nausicaa* with what speed and elegance he could play at ball. He produced his first tragedy when he was twenty-seven years of age, and laid his pen aside only at his death. Nor did poetry bound the horizon of his courage and activity. He did his best to prove himself a man of action and affairs. When Pericles set out upon his expedition to Samos, Sophocles accompanied him as a general, and doubtless he lightened the burden of the campaign by his amiability and high spirit. For the rest, he discovered but a slight talent for warfare, and I rejoice to think that he failed completely in the field of democratic Socialism. 'As to political affairs,' says a biographer, 'he was not able nor energetic in them, but behaved as any other virtuous Athenian might have done.'

A virtuous Athenian—that is precisely what

he was, the fitting companion of Pericles and Phidias. And being a virtuous Athenian he was in his youth a liberal lover; yet he did not pursue the golden thread of passion beyond the proper season. 'How does love suit with age?' Plato asked him. 'Peace,' he replied; 'most gladly have I escaped from that, and feel as if I had escaped from a mad and furious master.' So his age, like old Adam's, was 'frosty, yet kindly.' Above all, the splendour of his genius was undimmed unto the end. When Iophon, his son, brought him before a court of law, urging that he was imbecile, Sophocles disdained argument. It was enough for him to recite the noble chorus in praise of Colonus, whose copses, now ruined choirs, were once the haunt of nightingales. The judges rose to do him honour, confessing that he had magnificently vindicated his sanity, and led him in triumph to his house.

Happily for us, the gossips of Greece, which also had her Aubreys and her Anthony à Woods, are not silent concerning Sophocles. Ion, the poet, for instance, wrote a book on *The Arrival of Illustrious Men in the Island of Chios*, a book which survives only in fragments, and in exchange for which we would give a vast deal of serious literature. The

work, I am sure, would not belie its superb title, and we cannot be too grateful for the rescued page, which preserves for us a specimen of Sophocles's table-talk. Now Ion met Sophocles in Chios, when the poet was on his way to command the troops in Lesbos. He found him, as we might expect, 'a man very pleasant over his wine, and very witty.' The mere words seem to bring Sophocles intimately before us. We know him at once, as we know Milton, when Aubrey tells us that 'he would be cheerful even in his gout fits, and sing.' And one Hermesilaus entertained the poet at dinner, and among others present was a pedant schoolmaster from Eretria, for the schoolmaster was already abroad, who, when Sophocles quoted with approval the line of Phrynichus, 'the light of love doth shine in purple cheeks,' most foolishly took him up. 'You are a great man in poetry, O Sophocles,' said he, 'but Phrynichus did not say well when he called purple cheeks a mark of beauty. For if a painter were to cover the cheeks of this boy with purple paint he would not be beautiful at all.' 'Then, my friend,' answered Sophocles, laughing at his pedantry, 'you do not like the poet who spoke of the golden-haired Apollo, for if the

painter were to represent the hair of the god as actually golden, the picture would be all the worse. Nor do you approve of the poet who spoke of rosy-fingered. For if any one were to dip his finger in rose-coloured paint he would make his hands like those of a dyer and not of a pretty woman.' Thus the schoolmaster was put out of countenance, and a scrap of gossip carries us across the bridge of two thousand years into the very presence of Sophocles himself.

Sophocles was, in truth, neither pedant nor schoolmaster. To repeat the immortal phrase, 'he was a man very pleasant over his wine, and very witty.' Was there ever a poet who did not deserve this lofty praise? Shakespeare, at any rate, might have met Sophocles on the common ground of wit and pleasantry. He too discoursed at his ease and gave himself up to mirth. You may picture him passing a happy middle-age at New Place, and then conjure up a like vision of Sophocles at Colonus. Only the dullard drives joyousness from his heart. The poet of Greece and the poet of England may join hands in sublimity and merriment. What Phrynichus said of Sophocles is true of them both: 'Many and fair were the tragedies which they made; fair was their end; nor suffered they any sorrow.'

XXIX

THE ANTI-ARTISTIC TEMPERAMENT

For many years that vague thing called the artistic temperament has been a by-word of shame and reproach. A too ardent youth, unable to keep on the hither side of the law, not infrequently pleads in excuse that it is the artistic temperament which has led him astray. He is an actor, he tells the magistrate, or a poet, or a painter, and he pleads that he should therefore be excused the common obligations of life. A vain plea, truly! It is not by mimicking the vices which gossip ascribes to the great that a man may walk in the footsteps of tradition. Art is a stern goddess, who demands an anchorite's severity from the least of her worshippers.

And while the artistic temperament is grossly misunderstood, the anti-artistic temperament passes without reproof. Yet the man, thus sadly endowed, is by no means rare in the world's experience, and when he

happens upon us his capacity is infinite for doing harm by stealth. The virtues of routine are all his. He is commonly an excellent father of a family. He prides himself upon the expedition wherewith he despatches the business of his life. His accounts in money and morals are always delicately balanced. It is only when an artist crosses his path that he forgets the claim of justice, and by the ruin and discomfort of one wreaks his vengeance upon the whole breed.

He dislikes the artist, first of all because he cannot understand the artist's purpose. It is incredible to his narrow intelligence that a sane man should lose all sense of time in the vain pursuit of perfection. If a commission be not finished by an appointed day, he is quick to scent a deliberate fraud. He knows that if he orders a pound of tea it arrives at his house with absolute punctuality, and he refuses to acknowledge that there is the slightest difference in the fashioning of a great monument and the delivery of household stores. When he meets his adversary, he spares his sensibilities as little as he understands his design. As he is a keener man of business than the artist, he is sure also that he has

a clearer knowledge of what he and the people want, and under his malign auspices the work which it should have been a pleasure to create becomes a sordid and long-drawn tragedy.

To make a masterpiece does not seem of itself a crime or disgrace. But no sooner does the man of the anti-artistic temperament scent the project than he is intent to put the miserable craftsman in his place. In all ages and under all skies the anti-artist has flourished. The monument of Pope Julius has been justly called 'the tragedy of Michelangelo's life.' It involved the sculptor, himself a masterful man, in the vilest insults. He was denounced for 'a cheating rascal' and expelled from the Papal ante-chamber. When Julius died, his friends espoused his quarrel, and, being also of that gloomy temper which despises artists, they denounced the sculptor, whose first crime it was to have put Julius in deathless bronze, as the vilest of men and swindlers. They brought actions against him in the law courts; they demanded in reparation more money than Michelangelo could ever have collected; and they wrung from him such a reproof as might have softened any hearts but theirs. 'Petty spites,' wrote the sculptor from the depth of his poverty, 'have prevented

me from doing what I want to do these many months ; one cannot work at one thing with the hands, another with the brain, especially in marble. 'Tis said here these insults are meant to spur me on ; they are scurvy spurs, which make a good steed jib.' Time long ago brought its revenge, and if the champions of Julius are remembered to-day, it is merely as the tormentors of Michelangelo.

If Alfred Stevens suffered in his lifetime the fate of Michelangelo, the Dean and Chapter of St. Paul's have done their best to repair the misdeeds of the past by accepting the completion of his design, the generous gift of enthusiasts. At last the superb monument of the Duke of Wellington stands where Stevens wished it to stand ; at last it is surmounted by the equestrian statue which Stevens designed to surmount it. An act of wisdom and tardy justice is done. What the Dean and Chapter cannot do is to atone for the superfluous hardships laid upon Stevens by their predecessors and by the British Government. St. Paul's, a fruitful source of insult and ignominy to Christopher Wren, who was guilty of its creation, did not fall below its opportunity when Stevens was asked to embellish it. At every step in the sordid drama Stevens was treated

with a kind of contempt. First of all, the jury gave the first premium to another, and when at last Stevens was formally entrusted with the commission, it was to an eloquent chorus of indignation. That he might not be too much puffed up at his triumph, he was ordered to submit an elaborate model, which order put upon him ten years of superfluous toil, and the result of which was that, when half the monument was finished, all the money was spent save some three thousand pounds.

And then there entered on the scene one Ayrton, who, because he was endowed far above all his fellows with the anti-artistic temperament, was placed by Mr. Gladstone at the Office of Works. At last the man and the occasion met. Stevens was precisely the kind of victim in whom such officials as Ayrton delight. Instantly he bade Stevens deliver the monument as it stood, together with his models and designs. Stevens, resolved that while he lived none other should carry out his work, stoutly refused. He contented himself by pourtraying Ayrton in a famous chimney-piece, and for the rest preserved a gloomy silence. At last friends intervened, and the monument was worthily and amicably completed. But the quarrel

did not end with Stevens's death. The Government, with Mr. Ayrton's aid, had played its part. Now the Dean and Chapter entered upon the scene.

They had got their masterpiece. They refused to display it. The monument—the greatest achieved by an Englishman—was designed to fill a certain space in the building and to be seen in a certain condition of light. The Dean and Chapter dishonoured their trust by hiding it in a side chapel. Worse still, they declined to permit a horse, in bronze or marble, within the precincts of their church, and thus the monument was deprived of the equestrian statue designed to complete it. Dean Milman, liberally endowed with the anti-artistic temperament, showed his contempt for the fitness of things by suggesting that the duke should be represented not upon horseback but, like the infant Samuel, in an attitude of prayer. This foolish suggestion was not accepted, and until now we have been able to see but a fragment of Stevens's noble design.

As I have said, St. Paul's has made what reparation it could, and it deserves the gratitude of all those who see in the perfection of a work of art something better than a crime.

The enemies of propriety have at last been worsted, and Stevens, if he may look across the border-land of life and death, will see his masterpiece placed where he would have placed it, crowned as he would have crowned it. And, thus seeing it, he will forget the bitterness which he shared with Michelangelo, with Christopher Wren, with all those, who have not bowed the knee in humble submission to the practical contemner of the arts.

XXX

POISONOUS BOOKS

THE age we live in is the golden age of the policeman. The man in blue conducts us from the cradle to the grave. Not for a moment can the sacred People evade his authority. He enforces the education of its children. He appears awful and immense, if the stamps are not properly affixed to its insurance papers. He is always at hand to enforce the collection of the taxes, which weigh more heavily upon us year by year. And now, if certain estimable gentlemen have their way, he is to be appointed the sole and omnipotent censor of our literature.

The solemn deputation, which not long since implored the Home Secretary to check the sale of what it termed 'demoralising literature,' was not attended by a single man of letters. The omission is serious, because the ultimate definition of what is 'demoralising' in print must be framed not by well-inten-

tioned publishers or alert magistrates, but by those who themselves exercise the craft of literature. It is and will always be a question not of morality but of æsthetic criticism. Even the deputation at the Home Office, ill constituted as it was, seemed to have a glimmering of this truth. It accepted without reserve the recommendation, 'that a provision should be inserted to exempt from the operation of the Act any book of literary merit or reputation or any genuine work of art.' And having accepted this recommendation, it left the delicate task of estimating literary merit or discovering genuine works of art to the Home Office and the police!

If the deputation had in its mind only those books which are no books, those *biblia abiblia*, which are sold in secret and read in privacy, there would be no need of protest. Their intent is obvious to the first comer, and their punishment is, I believe, adequately provided for by the law. Neither definition nor criticism is necessary for their discovery. They proceed from ignoble presses, and they have not the remotest touch with literature. No provision need be inserted in any Act, which is aimed to check their circulation.

Books of literary merit, genuine works of art, are further from them than from the wrappers of pounds of tea, and though their stupidity diminishes vastly their power of harm, they deserve, and they should obtain, no quarter.

But it is clear that the police have drawn no fine distinctions in their literary criticism. There are still books on the border-line, it seems, which baffle the subtlety even of the Home Secretary and his satellites. With an uneasy sense that all is not well, the deputation desired that the word 'indecent' should be used in conjunction with the word 'obscene.' I agree with the Dean of York that it is not easy to distinguish between these two epithets. The deputation further urges the police to be more vigilant and active in the matter of prosecutions. Have they not sometimes been over-vigilant? Within recent memory the translator of Emile Zola, that austere moralist, suffered imprisonment at the very moment when Zola was being feasted at the Mansion House; Rabelais has been denounced as a 'filthy priest' by an Old Bailey lawyer; and an honest publisher has been locked up for no other crime than publishing an edition of Urquhart's deathless version of Gargantua.

What, I wonder, is a 'poisonous' book? And

what are the symptoms of book-poisoning? Is the disease fatal, or can its victims be cured if it be taken in time? Who they are, who succumb to this poison, may readily be imagined. They have no chins, these poor creatures, and their foreheads recede at an angle of forty-five degrees. Is it worth putting Rabelais in the dock, and imprisoning the translator of Zola, to save their feeble intellects from a shock? One would not have thought so. But an age which cheerfully sacrifices the fit for the encouragement of the unfit will not scruple to inflict an injustice upon the masters of literature, if only it can protect from injury the few degenerates, who suck poison from a printed page.

It is the duty, then, of all men of letters to watch with the keenest vigilance the action of their critics, the police. It is no new danger that threatens them, nor does it come unexpectedly. In all ages and in most lands there have been certain zealous persons, quick to scent offence, and unable to distinguish life from literature. They have condemned all such books, these zealous persons, as dare to transcend their own experience. They have visited the heroes (or villains) of fiction with the same condemnation as they would

measure out to their neighbours were they guilty of the same offence. Tom Jones was a wicked man, they say ; therefore Fielding was a wicked man, and they are wicked who read his masterpiece. And if they could persuade the Home Office to place that masterpiece under its ban, they would believe they had done a profitable day's work.

Nor is it a delicate sense of morality which has persuaded those enemies of literature to the assault. Rather it is a pitiful lack of imagination. They do not understand books nor their purpose. They do not read them for enjoyment's sake, but rather that they may do their authors a mischief. They forget that life must be judged by one set of rules, literature by another, that a 'genuine artist' may lift the foul and ugly to the topmost height of beauty. The splendid verse of Sophocles purges of all offence the horrible sufferings of Philoctetes. Œdipus the King as the poet saw him and showed him is the victim of a noble tragedy. Probably for the policeman he is no better than an incestuous murderer, who would not be allowed on his beat for a minute.

Literature does not need the policeman. She does not want to answer irrelevant ques-

tions. When Flaubert, having written a work of genius, was put in the dock for his pains, the prosecuting counsel rivalled that home-grown specimen of ours who labelled Rabelais a 'filthy priest.' 'Gentlemen,' said he, 'did Madame Bovary love her husband, or did she even try to love him?' That is the kind of criticism which we may expect from the magistrate, and which cannot be tolerated even to save the imbecile from his folly. It is quite easy not to read books, and if the police are omnipotent let them restrain the fool from all printed matter, and leave the man of letters to his own devices.

And while the man of letters will guard his honour and his liberty from the assaults of the police and the Puritan, while the quarrel of one shall be the quarrel of all, there remains a wider question to be answered. Shall we surrender ourselves and our morals wholly to the magistrate? If we do, we shall lose much else besides our self-respect. A great bishop once said that he would rather see England free than England sober, and it is better that England should be free to choose her own books than entrust the policeman with the management of her libraries. A millionaire who has purchased with his money-bags the

right to express an opinion on all things once denounced the classics as 'very filthy trash.' The policeman would no doubt agree with him. But these are matters which each one must decide for himself, and with the Home Secretary for our art critic we shall fare ill if we do not make our decision clear. Above all, let us be virtuous with our own virtue, and not with the virtue ladled out by Government officials. For virtue is atrophied by disuse, and when it has perished the wisest laws ever devised to save man from his own responsibilities will prove a sorry substitute.

XXXI

WHAT IS A CRITIC?

WHAT is a critic? This question is asked from time to time, generally by those who have smarted from what they believe to be unmerited censure, and the answer varies in justice and amenity with the weight of the injury received. The critic is an assassin, we are told, an envious ruffian, who stabs those in the back whose works he could not achieve, a wanton destroyer of reputations, an ignorant hack wholly unfit for the duties which he dares to discharge. That he may be all these things is evident. There are bad critics as there are bad actors and bad novelists. It is equally evident that he need be none of them. If he faithfully perform that which he takes upon himself, he deserves the respect which all should claim who follow their art with knowledge and sincerity. For he, too, is an artist—an artist in criticism.

It is the critic's business to interpret to

others such works as his talent and education fit him to appreciate. He must possess a wide acquaintance with literature and the theatre. He must be quick to compare the present with the past, to base his judgment upon something more solid than a momentary impression. The standard by which he measures the performances of to-day must be a lofty standard. He may neither exaggerate nor belittle that which comes to him in the guise of novelty. If, on the one hand, it is a critical sin to accept the unknown always as magnificent, it is a worse sin still to condemn an experiment because it is bound to the past by a fragile link. A wide sympathy and a determination to be surprised at nothing are both essential, if a critic is to win the esteem, due to catholicity of judgment. But sympathy is merely one quality which the critic may not lack. If he be ready to praise, he must not shirk the duty of condemnation.

M. Jules Lemaître, himself an accomplished critic, has confused the question with a false definition. 'Criticism,' said he, 'is the art of enjoying masterpieces.' If it were, how easy would be the critic's trade! I can imagine no greater pleasure than enjoying masterpieces week after week from the depth

of a comfortable stall. But, alas! before you enjoy your masterpiece you must find it, and in these grey days masterpieces are hard to come by, especially in the theatre, where mediocre intelligence is the touchstone of success, and full bookings appear for the moment a clear proof of excellence. If, then, it is the critic's rare pleasure to enjoy the innocent, it is also the critic's stern duty to pass sentence upon the guilty. In reproof he must be candid and unashamed. He must set his face against bad workmanship as resolutely as a judge at the Old Bailey sets his face against crime. For is not stupidity the crime of art? He must spare neither his dearest friend nor his nearest kinsman. Literature and the drama must be cleared of rubbish as the street must be cleared of mud. If rubbish be exalted, how shall the masterpiece emerge from the gutter? Especially is severity demanded to-day, when all men can read and write by Act of Parliament, when the standards of art and letters are depressed to the level of an eager and restless democracy. Poor critics! Do they not deserve the pity of us all? They might, in happier days, have been enjoying masterpieces with M. Jules Lemaître. And it is their ill fortune to tor-

ture their sensitive souls with knock-about farce, which masquerades as comedy, and to find the zealous, mistaken author guilty, when they would rather dismiss him from the court without a stain on his character.

The disappointed artist is wont to ask in amazement whence came the critics and what are their qualifications. They come, I imagine, from the same class as the actors and novelists, and they choose their craft with a similar assurance that nature and training have fitted them for it. A man does not become an actor all at once unless he be endowed, like Edmund Kean, with an unconquerable genius, and even then he must find his place upon the stage. The less fortunate actor must study the arts of gait and gesture, he must learn to express by a perfectly controlled voice the emotion of his or his author's soul. In other words, he must improve his natural qualifications by study and patience. The critic, I suppose, must travel the same hard road, unless, like Hazlitt or Lamb or Coleridge, he be born into the world with a high and perfect sense of literary justice. If he be upon the level of the moderately accomplished actor, he must pursue the study of literature in as wide a field as is possible to

him. He must correct a knowledge of the classics with a liberal experience of modern art, and when he has done this he has as fair a right to express an opinion, and to be paid for it, as an actor has to stand upon the stage and to declaim, at hazard, the verse of Shakespeare.

Balzac once said, with a reservation, that the critic was one who had failed in literature and art. This is a theory dear to the heart of 'the well-known author, who writes a novel for which a publisher gives him £1000, knowing that the public will buy it.' But it is true only of the baser critics. A true critic is one who has succeeded in criticism, and therefore in literature. He is not concerned with the circulation of novels, nor with the popularity of actors. He does not pit his judgment against the judgment of counting-house or box-office, because he has nothing whatever to do with those repositories of gold. He is not intimidated, when the novel which he rightly condemned reaches its tenth or hundredth edition, or when the piece which he justly ridiculed is performed for the four hundredth time, and is embellished with new songs and a coloured souvenir. These are the accidents of art which do not concern him.

He asks but one question: Is the book or the play worthy of praise? And he finds no other answer than that which his heart and brain dictate to him.

Especially do actors owe a deep debt of gratitude to the critics. It is the critics alone who save them from extinction. Without the critics they would be blown out suddenly like a candle. When in their due season they are ravished from our sight, for actors also must die, they survive only in the praise or blame of those whom in life they affected to despise. Hazlitt and Lamb 'earned their living by criticising the work of others.' What should we know of Munden and many another 'old actor' had it not been for the wise enthusiasm of Elia? If Kean stands still upon the topmost pinnacle of fame, he has kept the place which his genius won for him through the discriminating eloquence of Hazlitt. For once genius met genius, Kean found the critic he deserved, and we have an imperishable record left us of heroic art.

It is not, therefore, for actors to deplore the activity of critics upon whom their memory depends. By publicity they live. The man in the gallery who expresses his opinion to a 'pal' is already a critic. The exclusive

attitude of him who works for himself alone deserves a silent admiration. The artist who sends forth tickets of invitation to the critics and then resents an adverse judgment lacks both dignity and logic. Is he, then, a sound critic only who has learnt the trick of praise? It is true that we must all submit to the accidents of fortune, and a bad critic is not less rare than a bad actor. But for those, who prefer not to challenge the world's opinion, there is always the back drawing-room and the interested applause of loyal friends.

XXXII

THE ART OF PLEASING

There are few puzzles of biography more difficult to solve than the puzzle of Charles James Fox. At first sight he seems to have possessed few of the qualities which his century esteemed. He could not be said to engross the graces as John Churchill engrossed them. If once upon a time he was scrupulous about his linen and learned in the conduct of a clouded cane, he soon dwindled from the Macaroni into an inverted beau. He sat him down to play, for many years the chief occupation of his life, in an old coat turned inside out. When he appeared in decent attire his friends were lost in astonishment. 'I saw Charles to-day,' wrote Selwyn, 'in a new hat, frock, waistcoat, shirt, and stockings; he was as clean and smug as a gentleman, and upon perceiving my surprise he told me it was from the Pharo Bank. . . . His old clothes have been burnt, I suppose, like the paupers' at

Salt Hill.' As he missed the elegancies of life, so he missed its sterner conventions. Grown tired of punting, he thought it no shame to set up a Pharo Bank of his own at Brooks's, and empty the pockets of half the town. He kept the miserable Lord Carlisle at his country seat, because he was unable or unwilling to repay the money Lord Carlisle had lent him. As little scrupulous in public affairs as in private, he rarely lost the chance of making common cause with his country's enemies. Yet, do what he would, he could not alienate his friends or diminish his general popularity. 'Charles,' in brief, was a chartered libertine, bound by no laws, held fast by no prejudices.

I know no higher compliment ever paid to wayward man than that once paid involuntarily by Foley to Fox. Foley, like Carlisle, was Fox's creditor, and after a vast deal of reluctance he determined to confront the magician. When he had explained his grievance, and insisted upon reparation, Fox burst into tears. Instantly the case became hopeless, and Foley was driven to relent. 'However,' he boasted, 'I carried two points out of four, but I was obliged to leave him, not being able to resist the force of sensibility.' In other words, Fox, desperately in the wrong,

was irresistible. He could laugh, he could cry, he could cajole, he could leave even those, whom he had injured, with the unpleasant sense of being harsh and unconscionable. And the impression which his visible bulk created has not faded with the passing years. In his biographer's eyes he is still a faultless patriot, a generous friend, and a profound scholar.

And he succeeded in deceiving his own generation and the generations that have come after him by that 'art of pleasing,' in which Chesterfield vainly attempted to instruct his son. It is made up of 'a thousand undefinable things, all severally little ones, joined together'—'a significant look, a trifling attention, an obliging word dropped *à propos*.' Thought cannot analyse it; words will not explain it; we can get no nearer to its exposition than to say that we recognise it when we see it. In Fox the art was clearly and tirelessly displayed. He was urbanity itself. He was the more agreeable 'for his having no pretensions to it.' He won the hearts of all who approached him, and he wrung from his power of fascination the last penny of advantage. 'I do assure you,' said George Selwyn in a moment of tried patience,

'that I very sincerely love him, although I blame him so much that I dare not own it; and it will give me the greatest pleasure in the world to see him take that turn which he professes to take. But what hopes can we have of it?' Hopes, truly, few and frail! 'Charles' smiled or wiped a tear away, and all was well.

Whence comes this strange power of attachment, this skill to win unquestioned the love or approval of others? From sympathy first of all, from a quick sense of knowing precisely what the victim wishes and believes. He who is veritably urbane needs to be told nothing of his interlocutor. He leaps in an instant to terms of intimacy with him. He proceeds not by argument but by divination. He suggests by a subtle gesture or intonation that the man to whom he speaks is the one of all others whom he desires to address. The rest of the world fades into obscurity, and the fly walks, proud and exultant, into the spider's parlour.

This quality of insinuation is not a moral quality. It has nothing in common with virtue or intelligence. It may be observed often in those who are at the least pains to exercise it. Beauty of feature, distinction of

bearing, neither enhance nor retard it. It is found equally developed in Alcibiades and John Wilkes. For Alcibiades to breathe was to charm. Wilkes had improved nature by study. He was at times a trifle self-conscious in his desire to please. Yet with what skill he prepared his approaches! With what sureness of touch he played upon the vanity of the enemy whom he hoped to subdue! No better example of the art can be given than Wilkes's encounter with Samuel Johnson: ' "And who is the gentleman in lace?" "Mr. Wilkes, sir." This information confounded him; he had some difficulty in restraining himself.' The sequel was an undisputed triumph for Wilkes, who placed himself next the doctor at dinner and gained upon him insensibly. He was 'very assiduous in helping him to some fine veal,' and his happy address must be quoted without the change of a syllable: 'Pray give me leave, sir,' said he. 'It is better here—A little of the brown—Some fat, sir—A little of the stuffing—Some gravy—Let me have the pleasure of giving you some butter—Allow me to recommend a squeeze of this orange; or the lemon, perhaps, may have more zest.' As a work of art it is perfect, and not even Johnson could

resist its delicate insinuation. He bowed ; he turned his head 'with a look for some time of surly virtue ; but, in a short while, of complacency' ; and Wilkes was left victorious on the field.

The art of pleasing lightens more easily than any other the burden of life. It is the gayest boon to friends, the sternest humiliation to enemies. And if sometimes it seems to lack sincerity, let us remember that in the swift intercourse of every day we are not upon oath, that he who would always force a disagreeable truth upon his neighbour is nothing less than an ogre. Nevertheless, in evil persons the trick of insinuation may be turned to evil purposes. A crafty politician uses it to force his dangerous sophistries upon the mob. In our own days the example of Fox has been widely followed, and we have seen the enemies of England willingly accepted as her governors. Practised by the cruel and cunning criminal, the art of pleasing is the most dangerous of all the arts. The scoundrel John Williams, for instance, celebrated by De Quincey, was an adept at this kind of fascination. 'Now, Miss R.,' said he to a girl he designed to murder, 'supposing that I should appear about midnight at your bedside, armed with

a carving knife, what would you say ?' To which the girl replied: 'Oh, Mr. Williams, if it was anybody else, I should be frightened. But as soon as I heard your voice, I should be tranquil.' Poor girl! Well might she have paid too high a price for the privilege of being pleased!

XXXIII

'OUR NOBLE SELVES'

SOME years since, in a moment of happy optimism, a writer of musical comedies declared that, if you would discover the Shakespeare of our days, you must look for him in the sacred home of burlesque. To-day there are other candidates for the Shakespearean laurel. Has it not been announced in a 'humble' petition to the king, that our contemporary dramatists 'cannot be matched by any similar group since the days of the unparalleled outburst of drama in the time of Shakespeare'?

For this warm glow of satisfaction which seems to pervade the dramatist there is a certain excuse. He sees almost as vividly as the actor the immediate result of his work. The cries of 'author' ring in his delighted ear. He approaches far more nearly to his public than the mere writer of a book. He may be present, if he choose, at the very

act of public appreciation. He is borne crest-high upon the wave of fashion. And it is little wonder that he and his friends exaggerate the grandeur of his achievement and murmur the name of Shakespeare and his in the same sentence.

A close relation indeed must necessarily exist between the dramatist and his audience. The mere cost of production makes it imperative that the people's tastes should be consulted. The expression of a man's own mind and thought does not justify the vast expense of a theatre. The playwright, therefore, is asked to express something which echoes the opinion of his public. As the impulsive orator permits his auditors to make his speech, so the dramatist must allow his patrons to collaborate in his plays. And from this half-conscious collaboration there comes an intimate sympathy, which no other craftsman than the playwright knows. If, on the one hand, a dramatist sacrifices something to attach his audience, delighted to hear its own thoughts lucidly interpreted, the audience, on the other hand, puts no check upon its gratified enthusiasm.

From this sympathy, which only the greatest can resist, comes the short life of the drama.

Few, indeed, are the specimens which emerge from one age into the next. And by a consequent irony it is always the drama, which has enjoyed the highest of contemporary praise. Since the author of *Hamlet* died at Stratford-on-Avon, there has passed scarcely a generation without its Shakespeare. That he should always have been used as a standard of comparison, sometimes for the better, sometimes for the worse, is perhaps the loftiest tribute that has been paid his genius. Retrace the high-road of history as you will, you will find it strewn with the fragments of dead dramas, once hailed as Shakespearean by proud audiences. Examples may be found wherever and as often as you please. It is not likely, for instance, that the works of Shadwell will ever see the footlights again, and since that writer was both careless and insensitive as to literary style he can be read only by the patient and the curious. Yet he sailed so easily before the popular breeze that he believed he had left Shakespeare far behind. 'I can truly say,' he wrote with superb arrogance when he had botched *Timon*, 'that I have made it a play.' And to-day his arrogance involves him in nothing more than well-merited ridicule.

Though Congreve deserved better things than the customary comparison, even he could not escape the exaggeration of his friends. After the production of *The Double Dealer*, Dryden put him upon the throne. He surpassed Fletcher in 'easy dialogue,' Jonson in 'strength of judgment.' In brief:

> 'This is your portion, this your native store;
> Heaven, that but once was prodigal before,
> To Shakespeare gave as much; she could not give him more.'

In spite of this inapposite eulogy Congreve lived to write, in *The Way of the World*, the best English comedy by another hand than Shakespeare's. Its very merits unfitted it for the stage. Damned at its first appearance, it has rarely claimed the freedom of the theatre, where its exquisite wit and polished diction fought a fight vainly against the actor. As a piece of literature, it is still supreme; as a picture of manners, it will outlast all the rivals of its age. But the pit hissed it, and it was for *The Double Dealer*, not for *The Way of the World*, that Dryden, following the invariable practice of criticism, set Congreve in the same fold with Shakespeare.

As we descend nearer to our own time we shall find the same uncertainty of judgment.

Hazlitt was not a critic easily carried away upon a gust of passion. He sought reasons to support his considered opinions. Yet he was unstinted in his praise of the *Virginius* of Sheridan Knowles. When others compared it, according to formula, with the works of Shakespeare, Hazlitt set the comparison aside, saying that the play was not Shakespearean, but true to nature. 'The seeds of dramatic genius,' he wrote of Knowles, 'are contained and fostered in the warmth of the blood that flows in his veins; his heart dictates to his head. The most unconscious, the most unpretending, the most artless of mortals, he instinctively obeys the impulses of natural feeling and produces a perfect work of art. . . . All his dialogue tends to action, all his situations form classic groups. There is no doubt that *Virginius* is the best acting tragedy which has been produced on the modern stage.' And where is it to-day? Gone out into the night of forgetfulness. And Knowles himself would hardly stay in our memory, were it not for a masterpiece of bathos achieved by Lord Lytton, who complained that Tennyson was rewarded with a pension 'while starves a Knowles.' Is there not here exemplified the whole irony of fame?

And none has this irony overtaken more relentlessly than Lord Lytton himself. In his own day he was not one Shakespeare, but several Shakespeares. He had written the best comedy of manners, the best tragedy, the best melodrama of all the ages. And how much of them all has survived to these days of ours? *Money*, once a living, breathing comedy, which drew real tears and real smiles from its spectators, is now an experiment in archæology. None, save the very young, will ever again tolerate the blank verse and primitive emotion of *The Lady of Lyons*. It is cruel to try it by the universal touchstone. A stranger to the stage, it will receive henceforth, and it will deserve, no more than a brief reference in a history of dramatic literature.

As we look back, then, we are struck only by the transitoriness of dramatic success. Sheridan, who popularised Congreve, still keeps a place in the theatre. Goldsmith, who deserves better things, is seen at infrequent intervals. Where are the others, far nearer to us than they in point of time? Does the present generation remember *Our Boys* and its author? Do the mere titles of the cup-and-saucer comedies remain in the people's memory? How many students of the drama

know the names of Tom Taylor's ingenious artifices? Gilbert still lives because, apart from his stage-craft, he possessed a literary sense and a gift of satire. He lives almost alone, not the Shakespeare—that he was never called—but the Aristophanes of his age. And though it is possible that the dramatists of to-day possess all the qualities which their admirers claim for them, it would be better not to anticipate the verdict of the future, and above all, if the drama is to be defended from the evil eye, to suppress even a hint of comparison with 'the unparalleled outburst of drama in the time of Shakespeare.'

XXXIV

ART AND THE PEOPLE

It is a common and an amiable belief that a genius for government resides in the People. The flower of our intellect delights to clamour with the largest crowd. It discovers a warm comfort in vast majorities. So long as it finds itself upon the winning side, it preserves a fine faith not only in its wisdom but in the chastity of its honour. If it consulted the page of history, it would learn that the greatest triumphs of thought and deed have been achieved by heroes who feared neither solitude nor martyrdom. It does not consult the page of history, which it condemns as 'anti-social,' but prefers to look upon life as a gigantic game of football, in which the majority of the spectators can always ensure victory for their champions by the ready sacrifice of the referee.

So, by a last act of hypocrisy and cowardice, we have done our best to make the People

supreme in affairs which it does not understand. We have used our ingenuity to render the votes of the intelligent and educated classes null and void. And yet the democrats are not content. The People is not the chief patron of the arts. There are still 'æsthetic aristocrats' abroad who regret that their taste and knowledge are superior to the taste and knowledge of the mob. Mr. William Archer, for instance, dreams of a democratic state 'in which the will of the community can make itself effective no less in matters of taste than in political and economic concernments.' And he dreams in vain.

Even he, stout democrat though he be, though he worships numbers so devoutly that he 'would rather be damned with all the world than saved with a sect,' is beset by doubt. He wonders whether there has ever existed a truly artistic community. He need not wonder. Such a thing never has existed, and never will exist. Not even the Athens of the fifth century will serve him for an example. There is no evidence to show that culture was more generally diffused in the City of the Violet Crown than elsewhere. A vast deal of the work done in our midst by the People was done there by slaves. The followers of

'banausic' trades were never more bitterly despised than by the contemporaries of Pericles. That there was no lack of vulgar citizens in Athens the work of Aristophanes proves conclusively, and where there are vulgar citizens there will be vulgar pleasures. Though it may be true that 'by the Ilissus there was no Wragg,' let us not forget that Cleon was an Athenian, and that the Athenians, if rumour be true, showed their respect for Phidias by charging him, when his masterpiece was finished, with fraud or sacrilege. In brief, there is little doubt that, as the Athenian citizen went forth in the morning to wring what profit he could out of politics, he turned his back with greedy indifference upon the pediment of the Parthenon.

Like all democrats, who consider the meaning and progress of the arts, Mr. Archer omits from the discussion the genius of the artist. He seems to believe that art is a mere matter of economics. He forgets that, had it not been for Phidias, the spirit of Athenian citizenship, the wisdom of Athenian statesmen could have paid no immortal tribute to the goddess Athena. As he comes down the ages he is still to seek in his argument. He asserts roundly that the Dutch art of the seventeenth

century was a by-product of Dutch commercialism! If all the merchants had gathered together in Amsterdam all the wealth of the world, they could not have modified by a jot the genius of Rembrandt, who worked for himself alone, and had so little thought of profit and loss that he, the most masterful and prolific of his kind, floundered for years in the sea of bankruptcy.

The truth is that Art, by the mere fact of her aristocracy, is no snob. She has nothing to do with caste or wealth. She is as general (or as capricious) in her favours as love and death. She disdains neither the palace nor the cabin. But she is a jealous mistress, and where she has cast a favouring eye she exacts a whole-hearted devotion. For her loyal votaries the People does not exist, wealth does not exist, no other caste exists than her own. If she 'climbs down,' as Mr. Archer demands that she should, to flatter the taste of the People, she is a traitor to her faith. She must be arrogant in her superiority, austere in her indifference to others. Keats recognised this necessity with an honest frankness, knowing well the sentimentalists of his day. 'A modern work, it is said'—thus he wrote—'must have a purpose, which may be the god.

An artist must serve Mammon; he must have "self-concentration"—selfishness perhaps.' In other words, he must avert his eyes from the People, and serve no other purpose than the perfection of his work.

The People is happily at home in the polling booth. With the flaming poster of a knouted Chinaman fresh in its dazzled eye, it can confidently put its mark upon the ballot-paper. It finds it easy to affect an acquaintance with the business of government, and since popular clamour declares that it can do no wrong it is never called to account. On the other hand, whenever the People is put to the test of knowledge, it fails and must fail lamentably. It has neither the temperament nor the training, which should enable it to distinguish in the arts the good from the bad. Poetry and painting are sealed to its eyes. And they who would flatter it with the compliment of taste do it a profound disservice. They would fasten upon it a false admiration, which is the begetter of all hypocrisies. If the People honestly prefers the picture palace to grand opera, cheerful oleographs to the masterpieces in the National Gallery, scraps and snippets to the tragedies of Shakespeare, leave it in possession of its reasonable follies,

and do not attempt to convert its honest preference into a specious priggishness.

If superiority in all its forms be anti-social, then every man who overtops six feet should be lopped short upon a bed of Procrustes, and every woman whose beauty outshines the beauty of her kind should set a compensating scar upon her face. Above all, scholarship is anti-social, science is anti-social, for clearly the People cannot share them. Is it not villainous that this man should separate himself from his fellow by delving in the field of history, or that that other should profess an acquaintance with Greek and Latin, the avowed enemies of the proletariat? Thrift and skill, and the property which they bring, have long been an acknowledged disgrace, and surely the happy day will come, when art and learning will lie also under the ban. Who, for instance, would dare to say a word for astronomy in the august presence of the tyrant mob? Why, indeed, should the skilled and patient watcher of the heavens alone be privileged to scan through his telescope the stars in the People's sky? And if the sacred People declares that the moon lights its path by day, then moon shall the sun be called.

Yet the democrat is not happy. He is sure

that 'art must become a social factor in the life of the commonweal,' and he knows not how to achieve this amiable result. Though a spirited policy of clean-swept clubs and evening clothes may not be without a beneficial result, that is not enough. It is from art that the sacrifice is required. If the People cannot climb the steep ascent, where art dwells apart, art, descending, must become intelligible to 'the man of normal, unsophisticated perceptions.' In other words, the democrat admits that you cannot make a silk purse out of a sow's lug. 'So,' says he, 'there must be no more silk.'

XXXV

NATIONALITY

THE festival, which is from time to time held at Stratford-on-Avon, is a proof that England still takes pride in her famous men. She does it with a certain reticence, as though in fear lest she be caught bragging. The truth is our sense of national pride is profound rather than exuberant. We do not stand bareheaded on a damp hillside in fancy dress listening to bad poetry. We are incapable of taking part in such orgies of whisky and sentimentality as honour the pious memory of Robert Burns. It is not for us to make a parade of reviving a language which none of us understands. Even when we show respect to the name and fame of Shakespeare, who, after all, is ours, and ours alone, we show it with a discreet sobriety, and ask all the world to share our worship. Nor are we permitted to display a legitimate exultation even in Shakespeare without a protest. For there are some, Little

Englanders of the national sentiment, who declare that the poet never lived, and there is the heavy-footed Teuton, ready to boast that Shakespeare was a German. Had he been, in what a flood of oratory would the Fatherland have been whelmed!

For a reason still obscure we English are furtive in our nationality. As our schools are forbidden to display the Union Jack, lest the mere sight of the flag might infect the rising generation with the vice of patriotism, so Englishmen are quietly warned to conceal their origin, that it give no wanton offence to others. Irish and Scottish are epithets of pomp and pride. Their mere mention leads to stamping of feet and waving of handkerchiefs. English, on the other hand, is a term of abuse or impropriety. It may not be generally used. It is considered wiser not to chalk it upon hoardings. In certain printing offices, I am told, there is a strict order, strictly enforced, that the types may not lend themselves to this shameful combination. And though nationality is sternly denied us, elsewhere in the United Kingdom the cry is raised with a smug enthusiasm. In that hybrid word 'nationhood' there seem to lurk for some all the private and all the civic

virtues. At the very moment that the English are asked to suppress their own nationality, they are asked also to pay for the 'nationhood' of others. Ireland, Scotland, and Wales are ready, it is said, to furnish the applause, and all that is expected of England is to foot the bill. Verily, Mr. Asquith's scheme of 'Federalism all round' should be inaugurated on the birthday of the Jolly Beggars.

Meanwhile we are alternately patronised and bullied by the Irish. One day we are brutal Saxons, indulging our natural appetites at the expense of the brave and good. Another day we are a witless people attempting to govern the quick-witted, which is impossible. Are we witless, then, we who have Chaucer and Shakespeare, Newton and Darwin, and having them, have all? Never mind the wits, murmurs the Irishman presently, with his simple smile of presumed superiority, so long as you have the moneybags. Give us two million pounds a year, and we will be, what is ever beyond your reach, a nation.

And suppose, in this wild scramble of 'nationhood,' England declared at last that she would play her part, that she also would

be a nation, with privileges and perquisites of her own. What would be the policy of the others? For though it suits her sisters to abuse her, England is not without her uses to the nobler-hearted portions of the United Kingdom. Above all, she has no national jealousy. She asks not of those who serve her whence they come. When Dr. Lang was appointed Archbishop of York, a loyal Scotsman asked me if there was not violent indignation in England, that Scots sat upon both the archiepiscopal thrones. There was none, of course. So long as the archbishops are English in education and sympathy England gives them welcome. But for a moment reverse the process. What would happen in Scotland, if the two highest personages in the Established Kirk were of English blood?

Nor is the Church the only broad avenue of promotion. The Bar and the Bench, too, are open to all. For those, who prefer the slender comfort and certainty of the 'bureau,' there are the Civil Services, a free and fair spoil for Scots and Irish alike. And how would they receive the news, I ask again, of England's nationality? Would the cry of England for the English be pleasant in their ears? Would they praise Home Rule as they went packing

across the Border or across St. George's Channel? Possibly not. Yet why should they stand to win, whether heads or tails fall uppermost? Once upon a time Mr. Lloyd George, after his wont, asked a perfectly inapposite question. 'What right,' said he, 'had the electors of Canterbury to impose their religious views on the people of Wales?' Let us grant for the moment that this question had some relevance, and let us answer it by another. What right has a Welsh Chancellor of the Exchequer to lay a heavy burden of debt and taxation upon the back of England?

When we inquire why the spirit of nationality does not find so loud an expression among us as elsewhere in the United Kingdom, the answers are not far to seek. We are at once the least and most arrogant of peoples. On the one hand we have always shown ourselves punctiliously hospitable to aliens. (If, as Mr. Lloyd George and the Irish assert, we are aliens to them, are they not also aliens to us?) In the sixteenth century there was a riot in the city, because the interests of foreigners were preferred before the interests of the citizens. On the other hand, we have a silent assurance, which is often misunderstood. We

take for granted that which others clamour for. Ours is the good breeding which does not care to insist. Above all, our indifference to victory exasperates an age which esteems games, Olympic or otherwise, the best excuse for malice. We have been so long and so intimately accustomed to sport that we are content the best man should win. And whether he come from Scotland or from Ireland does not nearly concern us.

No wise Englishman would have it different. The variety of temper and talent thus ensured helps to make the grandeur not merely of the kingdom but of the predominant partner. Moreover, England has too high a regard for the Union to indulge a foolish provincialism. In politics only would we proclaim a grievance. To-day England is completely disfranchised. If she holds elections they are a farce, as democracy is a farce. Wales and Ireland govern her in defiance of her expressed wishes. And we regret this the more because England above all other countries possesses the genius of government. The misfortunes of the last years, which are neither few nor small, are due entirely to England's exclusion from the councils of the United Kingdom. If her will be too long and too insolently

defied, she will have no other course than to assert her nationality. And if England claimed Home Rule for herself, what would the future hold for Scotland, Ireland, or Wales?

XXXVI

SNOBS

A PIOUS Radical has recently discovered that George Meredith was a snob, because he claimed to be descended from some vague chieftain of Wales. That he made no such claim does not mitigate the folly of the Radical. Even if Meredith had looked upon his past with the eyes of romance, he would have incurred no blame. Hugo was no snob when he declared that his family had been noble since the sixteenth century. He was a snob when, on the discovery of his fiction, he proclaimed aloud his absolute disdain of pedigrees.

The charge of snobbishness recoils swiftly upon the heads of the serious persons who bring it. So sternly convinced are they of human equality that they would condemn all those who are conscious of their ancestry. A title of nobility is in their eyes a patent disgrace, to be punished by political extinction

and the 'loud laughter' of the House of Commons. A man must be esteemed, they say, by what he does himself, not by what his ancestors have achieved. The worst is that they cannot hold firmly to their opinion. If the past confer distinction upon the present—they protest—then let it be forgotten. If, on the other hand, the past may be pressed into the service of discredit, if a shadow may be cast upon the work of a great man by a commonplace parentage, we shall always find our Radicals prompt to remember the unessential in the cause of human brotherhood. Their inconsistency is manifest. Either let them forget alike the grandeur and the littleness of the past, or let them remember both. If they would be counted sincere in their belief that a man must be esteemed solely by what he does, they should show a wiser reticence than did Lot's wife, and refuse to look behind.

They cannot avert their eyes from a pedigree which belittles. The magazines have assured them, what Marryat long ago told them in *Peter Simple,* that Meredith's father was a tailor, and they would condemn him, if they could, to sit for ever upon the parental bench. They would treat him as a personage

in one of his novels was treated, and compel him to carry about his neck the shears, the cabbage, and the goose. Thus they would satisfy the general craving to scream with the crowd. There are more tailors than poets, and superiority distresses them less acutely when it is decently tempered. And they do not understand that, in echoing the indiscretions of the magazines, they are insisting upon what is not merely immaterial but untruthful. If the statement carries with it any general significance, Meredith was no tailor's son. His authentic ancestor was far greater than a chieftain of Wales. He was the offspring of genius, the child of fire and air. He carried in his veins the blood of poets and warriors. Before he visited this earth, bearing the aspect and name of George Meredith, he had lived in courts and camps, he had known kings, he had disputed with scholars, he had seen and measured the meanness and magnificence of life. And the Radical, who despises pedigrees and asserts with his lips that a man must be judged by what he does and by that alone, murmurs with an inward satisfaction that George Meredith, an aristocrat of race, was the son of a tailor !

The truth is that snobbishness is still the besetting sin of England. Our democrats especially are unable to accept genius and achievement at their proper worth. They display a delicacy in distinguishing the social grades which is not easily intelligible to simpler minds. We need not look far afield for illustrations of the national foible. A 'cabaret,' designed after the French model, has been established in London. It is artistic, Bohemian, and unconventional. In its cellar all men and women are said to meet upon a footing of perfect equality. Its promoters hope to 'see the lady with four rows of black pearls sitting next to Tommy So-and-so, who has just sold his first picture and is living upon £80 a year.' The self-consciousness of this pronouncement explains why the 'cabaret,' once the glory of Paris, has not flourished upon English soil. We cannot imagine the late M. Rodolphe Salis of the 'Chat Noir,' the master of his kind, taking note of the jewels worn by the ladies, whom he admitted to his theatre of shadows, or of the incomes earned by the men. As for poor Tommy So-and-so, who incurs the disgrace of making no more than eighty pounds a year, doubtless he will bear up against the four rows

of black pearls, whether they are carried upon a pole or about the neck of a lady. But what of the lady herself? Will not the voice of good sense murmur in her snobbish ear that a 'cabaret,' artistic and Bohemian, is not the best place to hang in chains, even though the chains be pearls and black?

In happier days there was a 'cabaret' in Paris, situated upon an outer boulevard, and though it was too sensible to call itself 'Bohemian,' it was beyond dispute artistic and unconventional. Just within the door there was suspended, as a warning to keep the peace, a chair with which a former proprietor had killed an insubordinate waiter. The man of genius who presided over it, at the time of which I speak, sang his own songs with a force and energy which none who heard them will ever forget. One cold winter's night there arrived at his door a party of four Americans —two men and two ladies. The ladies were manacled with diamonds, pinioned with pearls. The keeper of the 'cabaret' eyed them with disdain, and whispered a word in the ear of Maxime, the waiter. Now Maxime suffered, a trifle maliciously, from St. Vitus's dance, and as he approached the party of Americans his hands shook so pitifully that

the *bocks* which he carried were poured suddenly over the shoulders of the ladies. The revenge was shameful and not to be defended, and it is difficult to forgive the men for not making a forcible protest. But the homily delivered by the keeper of the 'cabaret' was eloquently just. 'Let this be a warning to you,' said he in effect, 'against the sin of impropriety. A "cabaret" is not a fitting place for the display of pearls and fine clothes. If you come here again, come not in pride and vainglory. Come rather with the simplicity of spirit which is expected of guests at a homely table.'

That simplicity of spirit is wholly alien from the snobbishness of London. Even in Paris it breathes no longer. Cosmopolitan splendour has extinguished it. If that man of genius, Rodolphe Salis, were to revisit the earth, he would not have the courage to go back to the 'Chat Noir.' Yet for many a year that prince of 'cabarets' contained the best theatre to be seen in Paris. There the young poets spoke their verses, and left it to conquer the greater boulevards, and presently to knock even at the sacred portals of the Academy. The walls were decorated with all the fancy of the incomparable Willette. Caran

d'Ache himself designed the shadows of the stage. And in the midst stood the flamboyant Salis, whose insolent familiarity made friends (or enemies) of all, and whose brazen voice declaimed the glories of Napoleon. The 'Chat Noir' died rightly and inevitably with the death of Salis. Can it be revived? Assuredly not in London. Across the door are stretched four ropes of black pearls, a barrier which neither art nor joyousness may ever pass.

XXXVII

ANARCHY: OLD AND NEW

Anarchy, like all crimes, fashions, and diseases, is periodic. It suffers action and reaction with the persistence of neurasthenia or the hobble skirt. It flourishes for a while, fades away, and then again revives in an altered shape. The last attack, from which Paris suffered, was cured by justice and the guillotine some eighteen years ago. And it is not without interest to compare the outrages and hypocrisies which disturbed us then with those which, under the auspices of Bonnot and Garnier, held a peaceable people stricken with terror.

The outbreak of anarchy, which terminated in 1894 with the Trial of the Thirty, concealed its brutality beneath a cloak of intellect. Though the object of Ravachol and Henry differed little from the object of Bonnot and Garnier, they paraded another pretence, they followed another method. Above all, they

were determined to win the sympathy of the Intellectuals. Either they mimicked the New Testament in their addresses, as did Vaillant, who wept tears of pity for himself and his friends at the very moment of dropping a murderous bomb, or they boasted the pedantries of Herbert Spencer, as did Henry, whose head fell to Deibler's blade, when he was just beginning to deliver a lecture on the elements of sociology. Thus it became the fashion of the prigs to be anarchists. Poets, incapable themselves of violence, boldly declared that it was a *beau geste* to fling explosives into a harmless crowd. Between those who talked and those who acted there was a close bond of sympathy, a bond which attached a vast number of philosophic sentimentalists to a mob of hardened criminals. The danger of this intimate relationship between murder and intellect is obvious, and it seemed as though anarchy, become the mode, might hold the French capital in its blood-stained hand.

Then Carnot fell to the knife of the miserable Caserio, and the trial of the notorious Thirty put an end for many a year to the outrages of anarchy. Never was such a trial held in a civilised city. The Thirty were

divided equally between burglars and poets. The most of the poets have long since found their way into the ranks of respectability. One of them—by no means the least prominent—became the editor of a literary review. Another, turned patriot, has knocked, hitherto in vain, at the door of the Academy. The acquittal of the Thirty—not more than one or two were condemned—was due entirely to the swift brain of a witty poet, who was their spokesman, and who showed himself more than a match in the argument of life and death for the examining judge. The boulevards laughed, and anarchy, appearing ridiculous, went instantly out of fashion, to be revived only by the scoundrel Bonnot and his confederates.

It was revived with a difference. There is little intellect in the pretensions of these modern apostles of destruction. They cling to a theory, as it were, by habit. They declare that they are robbed of all that makes life worth living. In other words, they would claim the fruits of toil without the toil which they disdain. And they affect to believe that the shortest cut out of their difficulties is indiscriminate slaughter. They have spared no class, not even their own, and

they excuse their frequent feats of cannibalism on the plea that those who have not joined their band deserve no mercy. Ignorant alike of the New Testament and of Herbert Spencer, they preach a plain and brutal doctrine of death and robbery, and the one Intellectual who seems to have been their ally, the shadowy M. Fromentin, has kept their friendship rather by constraint than by sympathy. If they are less easily inclined to hypocrisy than were Ravachol and Henry, they have proved themselves far more dangerous on the road. Fallen behind in 'intellect,' they have marvellously improved the methods of assault. Henry's bombs were effective enough. The particular specimen used in the Rue des Bons Enfants left nothing of its victims save two waistcoat buttons. But the most deadly bomb does not disseminate murder so widely as Browning pistols and motor-cars. Indeed, the application of science to the commission of crimes has never been carried further than by Bonnot and Garnier. Truly they have moved with their times. They have proved how kindly a handmaid of wickedness speed may be; and nothing is left for those who come after but to take to the air, and to seek refuge with their

booty in the mountains, like the blood-thirsty vultures that they are.

The excuses of anarchy, then, shift with the age. Its means are suited to the prevailing 'civilisation.' In other respects the anarchist is to-day what he has always been. The more he changes the more he is the same. He is as greedy, as idle, and as vain as ever he was. He is greedy for the pleasures—drink, women, and the glitter of lights—which he is too idle to win for himself. Vanity is still the ruling passion of his soul. It may safely be said that were there no egoism there would be no crime. The silly document which Bonnot left behind him might have been (indeed has been) composed by every one of his predecessors. It belongs, all of it, to a class; not a single word is characteristic of an individual man. Bonnot wanted his name clarioned to the ends of the earth. It was clarioned for a day or two, and then he was as though he had never been. The seeds of immortality grow no more freely in a criminal than in a politician. Bonnot held a momentary space in the world's notice because his vanity had driven him to murder. In brief, he enjoyed the notoriety of scandal, and than scandal there is nothing that has a shorter life.

Is the larger public an accomplice in these murders? That is the question which M. Lépine, the wise and valiant scourge of malefactors, asked at the graveside of a slaughtered policeman. His answer was decisive: 'There is too much philanthropy in the air,' said he; 'too long and too loudly has an appeal been made to sentimentality.' The unimaginative crowd cannot bear the thought of justified bloodshed. Has a policeman been murdered coldly and brutally, the crowd is indifferent, because it does not realise the lurid details of the crime. The sorrows of a hunted man, on the other hand, are quickly intelligible to its stubborn mind. And so it bleats with inapposite sentimentality, crying for mercy where no mercy should be given. The ancient argument of Alphonse Karr is unanswered and unanswerable: 'Let the assassins begin.' But this argument falls upon deaf ears. In vain M. Lépine demands 'the pity of the people, its enlightened pity, its pity for those who deserve it.' In vain he points to the bier of the dead policeman as the logical result of careless sentimentality. What matters a dead policeman to the crowd, which proudly defines philanthropy as the love of men who do evil?

XXXVIII

COMPARATIVE GRANDEUR

There is no enterprise so difficult as to arrive at a comparative estimate of grandeur. If you were asked to measure poet against warrior, sportsman against man of science, you would have ample right to shirk the unwelcome task. To which shall the bays be given—to perfection in small things or half success in great? The arts, which know no failure, are never free from the suspicion of mechanism. The greatest writer of prose or verse can never hope to rival the juggler in certainty of touch. If the absolute adaptation of means to their end were the final test of victory, then would W. G. Grace be the hero of the Victorian age, the easy conqueror of Darwin, Disraeli, and Tennyson. Balzac, conscious of the problem, stated it with characteristic arrogance. 'The first half of the present century,' he wrote in 1844, 'will be found to have been greatly influenced by

four men—Napoleon, Cuvier, O'Connell, and myself. The first lived on the blood of Europe, the second espoused the globe, the third became the incarnation of a whole race, while I shall have carried a complete society in my brain.' He stated the problem, did Balzac; he offered no solution of it. He made no attempt to discover a common denominator for himself and Napoleon.

The town of Cordova has recently displayed a rarer courage than Balzac's. Having resolved to set up a monument in honour of her greatest son, she made a choice which in its sincerity defied the critics. Her choice was not easy, for she was faced by an embarrassment of genius which would perplex few of the cities of Europe. She has always been, as a pious son said long ago, 'the nurse of science, the cradle of captains, the flower of knowledge and knighthood.' If her citizens had wished to do reverence to literature they might easily have found a brow fit for the wreath. There was Seneca, for instance, who might legitimately fill the civic heart with pride. He had his faults, like the rest of us. He was a rhetorician, who had not the gift of a continuous style. He wrote in jerks, and became a facile model to many who exag-

gerated his defects. The moral fervour of his prose was cooled by a constant devotion to opportunity. He denounced vice and sometimes followed it. He extolled poverty and did his best to avoid it. He seemed a great philosopher in his own age and was still an influence—in translation—upon the England of the seventeenth century. That Cordova is still conscious of his glory is made manifest by the square which bears his name. But she will not set up his statue. No, says the worthy mayor of the Andalusian city, Seneca does not deserve our respect. He had not the strength to check the wickedness of Nero, whom he oppressed with all the platitudes of flattery, when he might have denounced him with the voice of stoic philosophy.

And if Seneca were found wanting, what of Lucan? A great, if obscure, poet, more patiently studied in the schools as a desperate exercise than read by loyal lovers of humane letters. While his poetry was crabbed, his life was dishonourable, for having taken part in a plot against his prince he feared the logical punishment of death, and did his best to save his skin by bringing false charges of treachery against his innocent mother. So Cordova sets

his name upon a street and passes him by. Where Lucan failed Gongora could hardly hope to succeed. Yet many another city than Cordova might be proud of his patronage. A euphemist, of the pure source, he twisted and turned the Spanish tongue until it became an instrument not of lucidity but of torture. Yet no man ever devoted himself more ardently to the conquest of speech than Gongora. 'As I was beginning to know something of the first letters of my alphabet,' said he on the eve of death, 'does God call me to Himself ; His will be done'! Long ago, however, Gongorism became a by-word of affectation and obscurity, and Cordova refuses to fashion in immortal bronze the poet who invented it.

Even now the tale of heroes is but half told. Some might think Averroes, who first revealed the wisdom of Aristotle to Europe, the peculiar glory of Cordova. Others, with better reason, might choose Gonzalo Hernandez, the greatest captain that Spain ever knew, the hapless victim of Ferdinand's jealousy and ingratitude. But no; Cordova, with a magnificent gesture, has brushed aside scholar and poet, soldier and philosopher, and has selected for her commemorative bronze the famous Legartijo, a *matador* to whose all-

conquering sword fell five thousand fighting bulls. Here, at last, is a great man, concerning whose transcendent merits there can be no doubt. Criticism will be busy until the end of time with Seneca and Lucan and Gongora. Legartijo defies criticism by his many perfections. Never did a bull-fighter bear himself with a finer elegance. The rapidity of his death-stroke was matched only by its ease and surety. He blended in his own person all the nobility of the grand manner with the quickness and precision of the modern style. And he will look down upon Cordova for all time in an attitude of watchful repose, the many-folded cloak of his craft gathered in his hand, a triumphant conqueror over his many rivals in arms and arts.

Cordova has taken the road of sincerity. For her the one Muse is the Muse of the bull-ring. She sighs only for the Sun and Shade, and she commemorates not what the world tells her is sublime but what sings in tune with her own fancy. She was not always thus simply-minded. Time was when one of her citizens offered Pliny four hundred thousand *nummi* for his unfinished notebooks. Now, as Ford said long ago, 'no Andalusian would lose one bull-fight for all the lost decades of Livy.'

And, while we applaud the candour of Andalusia in paying honour where she believes it due, we cannot but ask ourselves what other countries would do in a like case. France, without doubt, would set upon the pedestal of reverence the last of her poets. Her loyalty to letters neither changes nor swerves. She knows that literature can achieve triumphs which are beyond the reach of politics or sport. The beautiful garden of the Luxembourg is a veritable temple of poetry. There Banville smiles his elusive smile; there the Socratic visage of Verlaine looks down upon the passing throng. The courtyard of the Palais Royal is dominated by the monument of Victor Hugo, dismoded as the desolate place in which he stands. But, with just or unjust criticism, it is to poetry that Paris still kneels in homage, a homage sincerely felt and freely given.

England less worthily bestows her favours. Most willingly she prostrates herself before the politician. Happy is she when at her street corner there stands the Radical member, in solemn purgatory of bronze, with frock coat of metal on his back, and tall hat, fresh from the foundry, in his heavy hand, bearing upon his face the placid smile which shone upon a thousand smoking concerts,

and with which he faced in docile obedience the draughty terrors of the Lobby. And when our memory strays from the immobile politicians of Britain to Legartijo, the serene and brave, who played a foremost part in seventeen hundred bull-fights, and has won a fame as lasting as bronze, shall we not confess that Cordova has found the truer way of glory?

XXXIX

A BACKYARD IN FIFTH AVENUE

Mr. John G. Wendel, an old-fashioned millionaire of New York, possesses, if we may believe *McClure's Magazine*, what has fallen to the lot of no other human being—a backyard in Fifth Avenue. It is not of large extent, to judge it by its picture, but it is worth one hundred and forty thousand pounds, which, wisely invested, might bring five or six thousand a year into Mr. Wendel's coffers. He refuses to sell or to build upon it, and when some years ago a rash speculator suggested a purchase he was sternly told that Miss Wendel's pet dog wanted the yard to run about in. The mere thought of sacrificing five thousand a year to ensure an exercise ground for a pet dog is revolting to the sensitive conscience of New York, and Mr. Wendel lies, indifferently no doubt, under the ban of its displeasure.

Nor is his backyard, the reflected image of a retrograde temper, Mr. Wendel's only indiscretion. This worthy citizen, an amiable relic of colonial days, has written up in his office, as a signal of warning: 'No Property for Sale.' Though he no longer cultivates a farm 'down town,' he still covers the piece of Broadway which he owns with two-storey buildings, lumber-yards, and livery stables. The enormity of his crime may not be evident on this side of the Atlantic. In the eloquent language of his own country, he is 'constitutionally bearish upon Manhattan real estate.' Think of that! He has diverted business into another channel. Oh, unspeakable infamy! And doubtless when on summer evenings he shares his backyard with his sister's dog, he chuckles at the reflection that there is at least one man in New York, who dares to walk at his own pace.

The real merit of Mr. Wendel is that he lives to himself. The fierce current of life in New York passes him by unscathed. He has the courage to despise sky-scrapers, to declare that upon his land at any rate mountainous houses shall not raise their twinkling windows to the heavens. He firmly and deliberately cherishes the opinion that New York, in its

overhead and underground railways, in its monstrous buildings, in the speed and bustle of its life, has taken the path of ruin and decay. Moreover, he gives to his opinion a practical and visible shape. The backyard of his house in Fifth Avenue proves at once his contempt of superfluous wealth and the stern independence of his spirit. Where every one else is cramped and pinched for room, Miss Wendel's pet dog has an exercise ground of his own.

The Wendels of the world confer an inestimable boon upon society. They keep alive and before our eyes the tradition of the past. The least of their actions makes it evident that that which is old is not necessarily despicable. They refuse to be cut and clipped to the pattern of the hour. They will not bow the knee to the god of uniformity. From them we may recover the habit and accent of our forefathers. The whole duty of man, as New York interprets it to-day, is to wring from the dollar the last cent of interest which it will yield. Money has long ceased in that nimble atmosphere to bear a definite relation to the necessities of life. The most of men who haunt Wall Street fight for wealth, not because they wish to buy more motor-cars and more

champagne, but because they want to add as large a mass of gold as they can to their useless hoard. In the pursuit of the dollar their honour is engaged. The story told by a young Frenchman of a millionaire who went down with the *Titanic* illustrates with point and irony the aspiration of New York. 'I do not mind dying,' said the millionaire, 'I have made my fortune; I have nothing more to live for. But you, *mon cher*,' he added, turning to the Frenchman, 'it is very tiresome for you to be drowned. Your fortune is still unmade.' The story, if not literally true, reveals in a witty light the Frenchman's appreciation of a finished life and a gallant death. There are some, artists for art's sake, who strive after money, not for what it will bring, but for the satisfaction it affords of a worthy deed worthily accomplished. And here it is that Mr. Wendel should prove a wholesome influence. He refuses to make the best of his property. He will not go out of his way to increase his already enormous wealth. When he might pack away another ten million dollars in his vast money-bags he writes up, as I have said, that golden legend in his dingy office: 'No Property for Sale.' Is not his career as fine a sermon on the vanity

of human wishes as the Fifth Avenue stage itself ?

The strayling from the past is far rarer in America than in Europe. England, above all countries, has kept unbroken many links which bind her to the history of other days. You may test the truth of Shakespeare by the present life of Warwickshire villages. You may follow the progress of Tom Jones in the west, and find not a little of spirit and fabric the same to-day as in the eighteenth century. Modern Bath is still the Bath of Smollett and Humphry Clinker. And though the desire of wealth increases yearly on us, there are many corners of the land where life is lived as it was in Elizabeth's reign without thought of money or profit. Men may still be found settled on their land, with no more to comfort them than the dignity of an unbroken inheritance, men who are not rich, like Mr. Wendel, and who yet permit themselves extravagances as great as a backyard in Fifth Avenue. The experience of most of us, I imagine, will afford examples.

Once upon a time I visited in a northern county a great house, which will never fade from my memory. It had been in the hands of the same family from immemorial antiquity,

and with the centuries it had lost nothing of its beauty. In an interval of wealth it had been adorned by Italian craftsmen. The hand rail of the stairs was a vast snake of mahogany, which coiled its way up through the house from entrance hall to garret. The square spaces above the doors were filled with Italian paintings. The saloons were decked with masterpieces of Italian furniture. In the black and white paved hall soft-footed priests moved hither and thither near the chapel door, as they had moved for generations. And upon it all had fallen the shadow of poverty. The silk hangings were torn to shreds. Broken windows had been left unrepaired. On door and shutter the ancient paint had blistered and peeled off. Only the park, with its noble trees and its herd of deer, defied the passage of time and the lack of gold, as wild nature always defies them. The great lady, who governed this beautiful domain, had the dignity which pride and long use confer. It was not for her to learn the modern trick of speech. She spoke with force and character the dialect of the countryside. As her words fell upon my ear, as I marked the waning splendour of her house, here, I thought, is the life of England's youth. And truly in that remote

corner of the land there were a simplicity and a grandeur, which all the hoarded dollars of the New World cannot buy, and which yet are not wholly alien in spirit from that backyard in Fifth Avenue.

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